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**MERCHANT ADVENTURERS**  
**1914—1918**





"FOUR-POINT-SEVEN."

# MERCHANT ADVENTURERS

1914-1918

BY

F. A. HOOK

CONTAINING THIRTY-TWO PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS  
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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### COMPILER'S NOTE

*The selection and compilation of the war records of the P. and O., British India and Associated Lines up to the date of the armistice—undertaken by desire of Lord Inchrape—has, needless to say, been a pursuit and a privilege of much more than ordinary interest.*

*The purpose of this note is to acknowledge the valuable and ready help, in the assembly of material, of the home administration, officials, commanders and officers of the several companies, and of Messrs. Mackinnon, Mackenzie and Co., the Managers in India and China of the P. and O. and British India Companies.*

## A FOREWORD

BY LORD INCHCAPE

THE aid of the Mercantile Marine of Great Britain towards the winning of the war needs to-day no laboured emphasis. Built, organised, and manned by the enterprise of citizen owners; torn from its accustomed adventures, with the perils of war added to the common perils of the sea; with decks armed, at the outset, not at all, and later but lightly armed; its hulls unprotected; its personnel, although disciplined, untrained in war—it has yet won, for all time, a place of honour in the nation's history.

From mercantile commanders, officers, engineers, and crews a full measure of patriotic service was claimed. Watching unceasingly, running when they night, fighting when they must, they faced all the vicissitudes of ruthless submarine warfare and the monstrous inhumanities of its practitioners, without flinching. Their allotted task of feeding the armies while the armies fought, and of sustaining

those rear ranks of the armies, the munitioners, while they fashioned, was a noble duty, nobly borne.

To the much that has been and doubtless will be written of the merchant seaman in war, the domestic record contained in the following pages may, perhaps, form a not unwelcome contribution.

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# MERCHANT ADVENTURERS

1914—1918

## CHAPTER I

### *THE P. AND O. COMPANY: A GENERAL SURVEY*

STRUNG out along the ocean lanes from London through the Suez Canal to India, Ceylon, China, Japan, and Australia on the fatal opening days of August, 1914, were the 200 vessels composing the fleets of the P. and O. and B. I. Companies all going about their "lawful occasion" in the conveyance of His Majesty's mails, of passengers and merchandise, between London and the great entrepôts of British trade in the East. None of the Companies' agents in the Eastern Hemisphere, and but few of their commanders, could have been unaware of the danger latent in the European situation; daily telegraphic communication for those ashore, and wireless for those afloat, had destroyed the old-time isolation of distant ports and ships at sea. With the advent of Britain

among the belligerents on the fourth day of August, the voyages of the majority of these ships were varied from the original programme, and the "adventures" of all were soon to assume a new complexion. Ships of the P. and O. Company in London were commandeered by the Government for war service as they lay at their berths; those approaching the United Kingdom were appropriated in advance by the Admiralty. On the ninth day after the declaration of war the *Mantua* and *Macedonia*, two huge Australian liners, the first-named fresh from a series of pleasure-cruising voyages in Northern European waters, had been made ready for sea as auxiliary cruisers and fitted with an armament of eight 4·7-inch guns. The danger was so menacing, so instant, that there was no time for the usual formality of Government hire by agreement. As an instance of the swiftness of transfer, the *Himalaya*, when a day's steaming from Penang, with mails and passengers on board bound for China, heard by wireless that war had been declared. Next day as she dropped anchor in Penang the commander was apprised that his ship was requisitioned by the Admiralty, and she was ordered to proceed forthwith to Hong-Kong for



*B. D. Holberton, photo.*

ARMED MERCHANT CRUISER "MACEDONIA" (P. AND O.).



conversion into an armed cruiser. The story of her service in that capacity is told in a separate chapter. Independently of any warlike prospect, four P. and O. and two B. I. vessels had been formally engaged for the ensuing Indian trooping season, for which they were then in preparation. These vessels were hurriedly completed for their destined purpose. Within a few weeks half the P. and O. and B. I. fleets—a hundred ships, a total of half a million tons gross—had been absorbed by the Government for aid in the prosecution of the war—for how prolonged a period of service no one yet realised. Before the war was two months old all of these ships were at work as transports, store-ships, armed cruisers, or despatch boats, passing to and fro, in their ordered courses, as shuttles of the loom which, during the ensuing four years, was to weave the pall of German ambitions. In the Bombay and Calcutta dockyards of the two Companies the work of conversion of their merchant ships to warlike uses went on with feverish haste, and by the end of October the British India Company's workshops alone had completely equipped thirty-nine steamers for service as Government transports. These vessels as a whole constituted the

cream of the passenger-carrying vessels engaged in the Eastern trade via Suez. As their names recur in this narrative, readers will be reminded of snowy awnings and spotless decks, and of sunny days spent in happy voyaging on tropical seas. War changed it all, and from this time forth ships and their voyages were, without exception, to take on a grimness of aspect undreamed of in days of peace.

The censorship threw a veil over the whereabouts and particular uses of ships in Government employ; it was known that some of the Companies' vessels were engaged in dangerous coasting work, the risk of which, save where ships, as cruisers, were manned by Government, had to be borne by the owners.

Business came practically to a standstill, and in some foreign ports cargo which had been actually loaded was redelivered, at their request, to shippers who found themselves unable to meet their financial engagements. Even in the case of shipments made previous to the war, there were lying in London in December, 1914, several thousands of tons of cargo discharged from the P. and O. Company's ships, destined for, but which could not be sent to, the Continent, and for which consignees

could not be found in the United Kingdom. The great trade of Antwerp which had been for thirty years a very important feature of the Company's work was totally destroyed.

"War-risk" premiums of £31,000, equal for a whole year to £180,000, were incurred by the Company in the first two months of hostilities; and in more than one case the freight earned from the Port of London was, from scarcity of cargo, less than the cost of the war-risk insurance.

The Company's first difficulty was to find ships, crews, and coal; the last-named had been commandeered at many Eastern ports in a wholesale manner by the Government. German lies, spread through the bazaars of India, combined with the exploits of the *Emden*, sent thousands of lascars to seek refuge in their native villages rather than serve on board British ships. In more than one case ships left India quite undermanned, and the unusual spectacle was witnessed of soldier and civilian passengers washing decks and working baggage.

The year closed with the retirement of Sir Thomas Sutherland from the P. and O. chairmanship. He had served the Company for sixty

years, had filled the office of a managing director for forty-two and that of chairman for thirty-four years. He took charge of the P. and O. Company's affairs at a time when the Company owned a practically obsolete fleet of 100,000 tons, valued in accounting at £35 a ton. He left it possessed of a modern fleet, of tonnage five times greater, standing in the books at a per-ton figure, counting cash reserves, of no more than £3 3s., and with a prestige and tradition second to none among British shipping corporations. His last service, and not his least, was to secure the amalgamation of the British India Company with the P. and O. Company. Lord Inchcape, who had actively entered upon the duties of a managing director on the 1st of October, 1914, then became chairman of the joint and identical boards of the P. and O. and British India Companies, and the responsible director of the policy of both.

By the fusion of the Companies, Lord Roberts, already a director of the British India Company, had become a member of the P. and O. directorate. He attended a meeting of the joint board on the 21st of October, 1914. His death in France a few weeks later was mourned by his countrymen at large, and not least by his fellow-directors.



During the year 1915 the Company's contract mail service was carried on without intermission, and the steamers continued to leave the United Kingdom with unfailing regularity, carrying their usual complement of passengers, just as in peacetime. Forty-two steamers of the P. and O fleet had been taken from their usual employment from time to time, and thirty-one remained in Government employ at the close of the year. Meantime the ordinary mails had greatly increased, and by December the letter and parcel mail to the Mediterranean and Egypt, where large numbers of the British forces were campaigning, was ten times greater than in the spring of the year. After seventy-eight years' service of the Post Office, the work of carrying the Eastern mail had become no less onerous and certainly no more remunerative.

The cost of operating the ships had increased by leaps and bounds, as, for example, the cost of supplying coal at Port Said, which had nearly trebled since the outbreak of war; while the rates paid by Government for commandeered ships left but a very moderate margin for their owners.

Freights during the year ruled high, but this was of little advantage to the P. and O. Company,

whose steamers for the most part were restricted in cargo capacity owing to the high speeds required by the mail contract. War-risk insurance, computed in 1914 to cost £180,000 per annum, had in fact involved an outlay of a quarter of a million pounds in 1915. But insurance against the risk of war was indispensable, even if it had not been compulsory, for no day passed in which the Companies had not a number of vessels on commercial voyages within the danger zone.

And very soon the risks of war were translated into facts. The first loss of the joint Companies had occurred when the British India s.s. *Chilkana* was sunk by the *Emden* in the Arabian Sea on the 19th of October, 1914; only a few days later, the s.s. *Rohilla*, a hospital ship of 7,400 tons, was mined off Whitby. Enemy submarines were already attacking merchant shipping, but the exertions of the Companies' commanders, officers, and crews, aided by the elaborate and successful arrangements of the Admiralty, sufficed to counteract them, and not only the rest of 1914, but the whole of 1915, up to December, passed without damage to the Companies under this head, though the *India*, in the employ of the Admiralty as an armed merchant cruiser, and manned by a naval crew,

was torpedoed in the North Sea on the 8th of August, 1915, with a loss of 120 lives.

The first loss by submarine to the Companies' services occurred when the B. I. steamer *Umeta* was torpedoed in the Mediterranean on the 1st of December, and within a few weeks (30th of December) this was followed by the much greater loss of the P. and O. Company's *Persia*, sunk by the enemy, without warning, off the Isle of Crete with a loss of 334 lives.

During 1916, one-half of the P. and O. fleet remained continuously in the employ of the Government. The P. and O. *Maloja* was mined in the Channel with a loss of 122 lives; the *Simla* and the *Arabia* were torpedoed in the Mediterranean. These disasters, and many escapes, are recorded in detail in another section of this book. The *Chantala* (B. I. Company) was lost by torpedo in April, the *Mombasa* in October, and the *Itonus* in December, all in the Mediterranean, with loss of life in each case; the *Golconda* was torpedoed in June in the North Sea. Besides these, the P. and O. s.s. *Socotra* was lost by marine risk, and the P. and O. Branch Line steamer *Geelong* through collision with a vessel which, for protection against enemy attack, carried no lights. The

*Himalaya* was, moreover, compulsorily purchased by the Government. Thus the tonnage of the two Companies was diminished by 68,000 tons gross. Notwithstanding all these increasing difficulties, the mail contract continued to be regularly fulfilled throughout the year.

By the summer of 1916, many of the P. and O. and British India employees of the permanent staff had joined His Majesty's forces. The Companies had undertaken that those who volunteered for service should not suffer in pay or promotion, and this undertaking was generously interpreted in its fulfilment up to and after the close of the war. The Companies' staffs of navigators and engineers had from this cause been seriously diminished; and steamers were running with less than their complement, so that the Government at last refused to take any more, recognising that the service of the mails could not be carried on without them.

Turning for a moment from sea to land, great changes had been made in Bombay, where the P. and O. and B. I. workshops and dry docks had been amalgamated, the P. and O. dry dock being subsequently enlarged to take in vessels up to 497 feet in length.



P AND O AND P I COMPANIES' BOMBAY DOCKYARD, SHOWING SHALLOW CHUTE BUILDING FOR SLACK  
IN W-0101A111



But the activity of the Companies did not stop there; in June (1916) the P. and O. Company acquired an interest in the New Zealand Shipping Company, which owned the Federal Line, and so, in the midst of the great world-war, their interests were extended and the number of ships in their control increased. This union gave the P. and O. Company a peaceful entry into the New Zealand trade, into that between America and Australia, and between the United Kingdom and Australia via the Panama Canal, besides making possible certain advantages in the way of interchangeability of tickets, ships, and routes. How great was the advantage from the union of the P. and O. and B. I. Companies, in regard to the mail service, was to be discovered later.

The year 1917 was that of Germany's most active submarine warfare, and the effects were soon felt; the *Mantola*, a new B. I. steamer, which had in the previous year been brought to port with her forehold full of water from mine damage, was torpedoed, without warning, and sunk in the English Channel; as the year advanced the *Berbera* and *Mashobra*, navigating the Mediterranean, were also torpedoed and sunk. Others belonging to the same Company were the *Umaria*, *Mongara*,

*Malda*, and *Umballa*, all sunk by submarines, and the *Okhla* mined off Bombay. The P. and O. Company came off no better, for the *Ballarat*, *Medina*, *Mongolia* (mined off Bombay), the *Salsette*, *Mooltan*, *Candia*, *Peshawur*, *Pera*, and *Namur*, were all destroyed, and through the loss of these vessels 129 men were lost as well. Three cadets and the second officer of the *Berberu*, and the commander, Captain H. J. Brooks, of the *Mashobra*, were taken by the attacking submarines as prisoners.

Many of these ships were household words with travellers to and from India and Australia. The *Medina* was particularly well known, even to those who had never set foot in her, for on her maiden voyage she had worn the royal standard at the main, carrying Their Majesties the King and Queen to the great durbar at Delhi in 1911. The *Maloja*, a sister ship (sunk in 1916), had borne the *Medina* company, having on board a gathering of distinguished visitors going to India for the same occasion. The *Salsette*, one of the most beautiful under-water models ever designed, had carried thousands of Anglo-Indians in the course of her service as the express mail steamer between Aden and Bombay. The *Ballarat*, *Mooltan*, and *Mongolia*, equally with the *Medina* and



*Muloja*, were familiar and favourite vessels in all the southern ports of Australia. The *Mantola*, *Mashobra*, and *Malda* of the B. I. Company, were new and costly vessels which had been intended to keep up that Company's passenger trade between Bombay and London. In all, in 1917, the two Companies lost seventeen steamers, which meant a diminution of their fleets by a gross measure of no less than 130,000 tons.

Faced by these losses, in addition to the absence of so many ships in Government service, it was inevitable that the growing difficulty of fulfilling the mail contract, always a first consideration, should early in the year have caused the Directorate of the Companies grave and growing concern.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, it had been agreed between the Government and ship-owners that ships required for naval or military purposes should be chartered to H.M. Government at pre-war rates, afterwards known as "blue-book rates," other vessels being left free for their ordinary work. By the beginning of 1917 the scarcity of free tonnage—a scarcity resulting from Government requisition and enemy action—had caused a heavy rise in freights; the problem of feeding the armies and the population of these

islands had become acute; and, in order to economise mileage, and thereby increase in frequency the arrival of food cargoes, the Shipping Controller proposed in March that owners should work the ships still remaining available, under Government orders as to routes and voyages, at blue-book rates, as far as concerned the owners, and on Government account as to surplus earnings. This brought relief to the national larder. That it rendered impossible the sustenance of the Eastern mail service was, in the circumstances, a relatively minor consideration; but the change of conditions made some modification of the mail contract imperative, and the P. and O. Directors agreed with the Post Office, as a temporary war measure, for the restriction of the mail service, as from the 1st of July, 1917, to a fortnightly line to and from Bombay, the regular services to Australia and China being suspended, which, of course, involved a reduction in the amount of the mail subsidy. On this modified basis the service continued to be worked until, and for some weeks after, the close of the war. The public had not the slightest idea during the four terrible years of the war how enormous had been the requisition and loss of ships; it will probably astonish many to hear that for some

months previous to December, 1918, the P. and O. Company had only one steamer running to India, all the others afloat being employed as armed cruisers, despatch vessels, hospital ships, transports, in carrying cargo on Government account, or in running across the Atlantic with troops and stores. But the joint control of the two Companies had been of the greatest possible advantage, for the mails, failing available P. and O. ships, were carried by steamers of the British India Company.

In August, 1917, the youngest of the directors of the P. and O. and British India Companies, Mr. William Mackinnon, who had been serving in the Army since the outbreak of the war, was killed in France while leading his company into action.

The enlargement of the Companies' sphere of operations by the acquisition in June, 1917, of a representative interest in the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand was a notable domestic event of the year. This was followed in the autumn by the purchase of the shares of the Hain and Mercantile Steamship Companies and the Nourse Line respectively, these transactions embracing 107 steamers of a gross measurement of 370,143 tons, together with their accustomed routes and trade connections.

At the close of the year 1917 the ships at the disposal of the P. and O., British India, and associated Companies stood at 319 steamers afloat or under construction.

These successive alliances have produced a single traffic system which touches every considerable port of the British Empire, and provides three distinct world-encircling main routes embracing India, China, Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas, with access over most of the by-ways of travel and commerce throughout the globe.

In the year 1918 the whole of the P. and O. fleet not retained on Admiralty charter remained under requisition by the Ministry of Shipping. The *Moldavia* and *Marmora*, which had from the onset of the war been continuously employed by His Majesty's Government in various war areas as armed cruisers, were lost by enemy action. The British India Company's steamship *Rewa*, a hospital ship showing the distinctive signs of the Geneva Convention, was, with "Kultured" brutality, torpedoed at midnight and sunk at the mouth of the Bristol Channel; other B. I. ships torpedoed and sunk were the *Nirpura*, *Matiana*, *Itinda*, *Uganda*, and *Surada*, the last-named only nine days before the date of the armistice. The *Shirala* was mined in the English Channel, and

the *Itria* was lost by marine risk in the Mediterranean.

The number of ships lost to the P. and O., British India, and associated Companies by enemy action up to the close of the war was eighty-one. These vessels represented little short of half a million tons gross. Their replacement cost, at post-war prices of labour and material, is not a matter of guesswork. It may be stated in round figures at somewhere between fifteen and twenty million pounds sterling.

The scheme for the insurance of ships and cargoes against the risks of war, which had been laid down some years previously by Mr. Huth Jackson's committee, of which Lord Inchcape was an active member, came into operation immediately war broke out and continued to be worked by the Government War-Risks Association up to and after the close of hostilities. Without the provision of which this scheme was the outcome the underwriting market would have collapsed, and the trade of the country would have been brought to a standstill.

The impossibility of replacing during the war the large number of lost vessels, whose values became payable under the insurance scheme,

placed the Companies for the time being in possession of large cash accumulations, which, lent meantime to the Treasury, were necessarily earmarked for replacing tonnage whenever building should again become possible.

The requisitioning of the mercantile marine by the Ministry of Shipping and the working by the Government of the scheme of marine insurance, above alluded to, resulted in a profit to the national Exchequer of many millions; but the sums recovered by shipowners were and are short of the amounts necessary to restore the lost tonnage, and, in some instances, in which arbitrary values were placed on steamers for purposes of compensation, they were grossly inadequate.

Ships were estimated in December, 1918, to cost between two and three times as much as they did before the war. Lord Inchcape, in his annual address to the P. and O. stockholders in that month, postulated the drastic writing down of values from the moment of a vessel's completion as the only method of shipping finance by which the probable trend of earnings and values in the nearer years of the future could be met and, to some extent, discounted. No warning has been uttered which more deserves attention.

## CHAPTER II

### A MERCHANT CRUISER IN WAR TIME: THE P. AND O. S.S. "HIMALAYA"

As an illustration of what one merchant ship did in the war when converted into a cruiser we will take the story of the *Himalaya*. On the night of the 5th of August, 1914, when the *Himalaya* was off Acheen Head, on a voyage to Hong-Kong and Shanghai with mails and passengers, the commander was informed by wireloss that war had been declared between Great Britain and Germany. On arrival at Penang next day he received orders to take the ship to Hong-Kong for conversion into an armed merchant cruiser. At Hong-Kong she was fitted with eight 4-7-inch guns and, at the end of August, was despatched to cruise in the China Sea to intercept enemy craft, and to protect British commerce from possible raiding by armed vessels. The ship's company was chiefly composed of volunteers from the original crew, amongst them being her former commander (Captain W. W.

(Cooke), ranking as navigating commander R.N.R.; the former second officer, who was made a watch-keeping lieutenant; and the fourth officer, who was granted a temporary commission as sub-lieutenant R.N.R., and appointed a watch-keeper. The naval commander of the ship, Commander A. Dixon, R.N., was assisted also by two naval lieutenants, a naval surgeon, and a chief gunner. The deck crew included some of the original quartermasters, and was completed by men drawn from the river gun-boats—British and French—while some of the ship's native stokers, supplemented by Chinese, manned the engine-room.

After cruising in the China Sea for a while the ship was ordered to keep watch off Manila, in which port eight German colliers were loading coal and supplies for Von Spee's cruiser squadron, at that time in the North Pacific. During the patrol only one of the colliers attempted to leave, but returned to harbour on sighting the *Himalaya*, and the attempt was not repeated. The *Himalaya* was attended by the destroyers *Ribble* and *Chelma* alternately, and was relieved, for an occasional run to Hong-Kong for coal and water, by the armed merchant cruisers *Empress of Japan* and *Empress of Russia*.



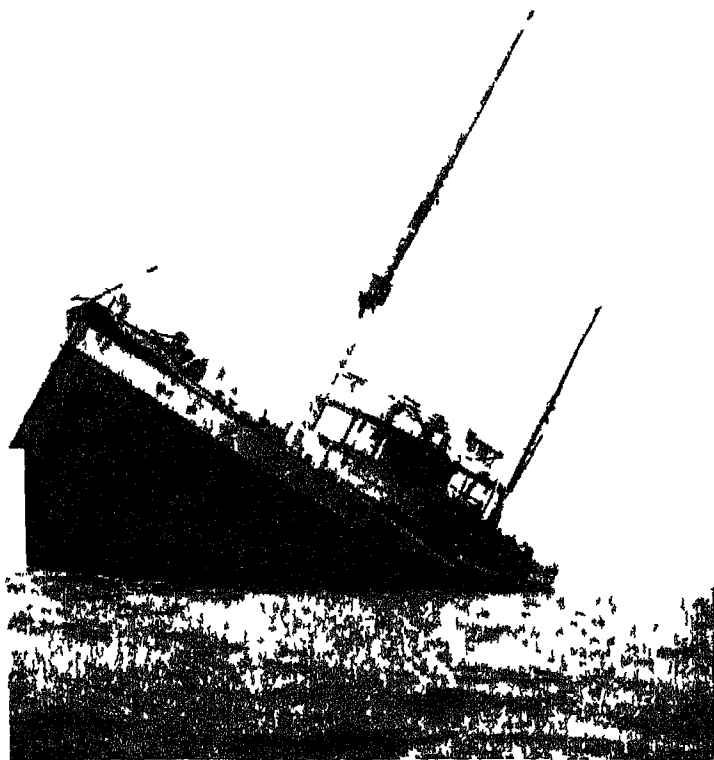
Towards the end of November, after about seventy days' watch off Manila, the *Himalaya* was replaced by a Japanese cruiser, and then proceeded in company with *Empress of Japan* to search the west coast of Sumatra and the adjacent islands for the schooner *Ayesha* which, manned by a German crew, had escaped from the Cocos Islands after the *Emden* was sunk. Whilst on this duty an English ship, which had been taken by the *Emden* and manned by a German prize crew, was recaptured and released while making for a port in Sumatra. After a fruitless search the *Himalaya* proceeded alone to Colombo, and there received orders to seek the *Ayesha* in the Chagos and Maldive Archipelagos.

At Diego Garcia, the southernmost island of the Chagos group, where the search commenced, the manager of the oil mills reported that the *Emden* had, some time before, entered the lagoon with a collier, and coaled. But as communication with the outside world was limited to a mail by sailing brig once every four months the manager had heard nothing of the war! The captain of the *Emden*, when asked if there was any news, had replied, "No, except that the Pope of Rome is dead." He caused the manager's motor-launch

to be repaired by the *Emden's* engineers, and left peaceably soon afterwards. So it was not until a British cruiser steamed into the lagoon a few days later that the oil-mills' manager learned that the world had been at war for several months.

All the Chagos Islands and numerous lagoons in the Maldive Archipelago were in turn visited by the *Himalaya*, including Malé, the principal island, where visits were exchanged with the Sultan. The ship anchored each night in one or other of the lagoons, the islanders were searchingly questioned, but no news of the schooner was heard.

The *Himalaya* then received orders to proceed to Aden. From Aden she was despatched to Suez to take part in the Canal defensive scheme. The Turks attacked in her section of the Canal shortly after her arrival. By means of her guns she was successful in driving off enemy troops, who made several attempts to excavate gun positions. Had they succeeded, they would have been enabled to shell the Canal and shipping at a range of about 6,000 yards; eventually they gave up the effort and stampeded, leaving camp equipment and tools. With the failure of the big Turkish attack on the Canal the tension was



S "KÖNIG," SUNK BY THE GERMANS IN THE LATHWAY, DART'S SALAM



relaxed, and the *Himalaya* was ordered to Bombay to dock and refit.

In April, 1915, she rejoined the Red Sea patrol, cruising between Suez and Jeddah until September, during which time, generally with a political officer on board, she visited Turkish ports on the eastern side of the Red Sea. The political officer's mission was to visit the Arabs ashore and convince them that Great Britain was not warring with the tribes but with their Turkish oppressors. Several times this officer and the crew of the *Himalaya's* steam-launch, when approaching the shore under a flag of truce, were greeted by a hail of bullets from hidden trenches manned by Arabs. At other times, when lying off one of these Red Sea ports (which have deep water right up to them between the reefs), the *Himalaya* herself, although flying the white flag, was swept by bullets from trenches which were cleverly concealed near the water's edge.

The Gulf of Akaba was visited several times, and some Turkish positions at the head of the gulf shelled. Abu Zeneima, about sixty miles south of Suez, and Tor, the quarantine station at the southern end of the gulf, were frequently visited. At the latter place the whole of the

civilian population, men, women and children, were one night embarked, as a Turkish raid was expected; but another man-of-war arrived, and the presence of the two ships, with their guns and searchlights, apparently decided the Turks not to attack. The *Himalaya* was occasionally detailed to search for mines, two of which were found behind the Island of Tiran, whither they had apparently drifted. In September, 1915, she was ordered home, and her P. and O. captain took over charge and brought her to Liverpool, the naval commander remaining in Egypt to fill an appointment on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief.

After a lengthy refit, during which 6-inch guns replaced the 4.7's, the ship sailed for German East Africa under the command of a naval post-captain, assisted by her P. and O. commander as navigator. At Simonstown an aircraft deck was built over her poop, and at Zanzibar her war-like equipment was reinforced by a seaplane, which she continued to carry during her stay on that coast; this proved invaluable in spotting for the ship's guns when bombarding Dar Es Salaam and other towns. On one of the visits of the *Himalaya* to Zanzibar the Sultan expressed a desire to fly, and



THE SULTAN OF ZANZIBAR RETURNING FROM A SPANISH FLIGHT



BOAT CARRIED OVER THE DISK BY THE TURKS FOR ATTACK ON  
THE SUEZ CANAL





the seaplane took him for a short trip, which greatly delighted him. The *Himalaya* remained on this coast until the whole coastline was in British hands; later she was detailed to act as guard-ship at various ports. After that she was detached for service as escort to convoys, and so continued to be effectively employed until the submarine war ended in November, 1918.

## CHAPTER III

### HELP FROM THE EAST: THE B. I. COMPANY

To turn now for a moment to the East and the huge country of India, more rightly a continent than a country, where some of the finest fighting men in the world, trained under British officers, were to be found. Such a source of strength could not be neglected. It was quickly determined that Indian forces must be brought into the field, and for this purpose sea transport in an unending stream was needed. The British India Company had a wide zone of operations; its ships served every capital port and many minor ports between the parallels of Suez and Shanghai, its flag was seen in all the ports of East and South Africa and in Mauritius, while its trade between India, the Dutch East Indies, and Australia was of considerable magnitude. From Bombay as a centre of military activity calls were sent out, and soon many vessels of this large and busy fleet were made ready for service.

The first merchant ship taken up in India was

the B. I. Company's *Varela*, chartered on the 2nd of August as a supply and despatch boat. On the 22nd of August the first convoy of transports steamed away from the beautiful harbour of Bombay. That convoy included the B. I. steamships *Bangala*, *Bharata*, *Baroda*, *Barpeta*, and *Purnea*. The two first-named landed their troops at Suez, the other three at Alexandria. Ten days later a convoy of twenty steamers was sent away bearing the first contingent of native troops to France. It is probable that the majority of these troops had never before left India, although many were tried soldiers; many of them had never before seen a ship or the sea. It is safe to say that none of them knew precisely whither they were bound, for the ships were under sealed orders; but they must have realised, from the nature of the preparations, that they were to take part in events of a magnitude hitherto undreamed of. This convoy joined up at Port Said with another from Karachi, and thus included thirteen British India steamers—the *Barala*, *Fultana*, *Mongara*, *Ula*, *Urlana*, *Umballa*, *Upada*, *Itola*, *Ellenga*, *Sangola*, *Teesta*, *Takada*, and *Edavana*.

The vast issues of the European War were, in some quarters, even yet not realised; but the in-

habitants of Bombay could have had no doubt upon the subject. On the 20th of September there left that port the largest convoy despatched from India during the war. This convoy also carried native Indian troops, and included the British India Company's steamers *Angora*, *Aran-kola*, *Bankura*, *Bamora*, *Bandra*, *Egra*, *Euryalus*, *Chakrata*, *Sofala*, *Manora*, *Ellora*, *Torilla*, *Taroba*, *Aronda*, *Coconada*, *Erinpura*, *Elephanta*, and *Pandua*, the five last-named of which came from Karachi and joined up with the Bombay contingent at sea. The ships steamed in strict convoy formation, and although commanders were as yet unaccustomed to this form of progression, the necessary accuracy appears to have been readily acquired, for the admiral of the escort, before parting company, signalled his congratulations on the excellent station-keeping which the convoy had maintained. Save the *Bandra*, which had been ordered to Mombasa, all the B. I. ships of this convoy went to Marseilles. It is perhaps unnecessary to dwell here upon the sensation which was caused by the arrival in France of the Indian troops. Their martial bearing and splendid physique, added to their picturesque appearance, must have excited

admiration among the people; but to those whose business it was to consider the military position, the fact that here were trained soldiers from the British Empire arriving in huge numbers must have been a source of immense satisfaction.

With the continued call for reinforcements the British India Company's resources in steamships were laid under still further tribute, and the powers of the administrative and technical staffs, and of the workshops and workmen under their direction, were strained to the utmost to fit more and more ships for the service of the armies.

On the 16th of October there was despatched from Bombay a third convoy of native troops, amongst the vessels of which were twenty-four B. I. steamers—the *Barjora*, *Ormara*, *Arratoon-Apcar*, *Surada*, *Dunera*, *Chilka*, *Beibera*, *Pentakota*, *Mashobra*, *Itria*, *Bangala*, *Umaria*, *Palamcotta*, *Neuralia*, *Varsova*, *Gregory-Apcar*, and *Itonus*. The *Ujina*, *Scalda*, *Tara*, *Islanda*, *Muttra*, *Bharata*, and *Umta* left Karachi about the same time, and joined the Bombay ships at sea. Of these steamers, four proceeded to the Persian Gulf, four to East Africa, one to Mauritius, one to Suez, twelve to Marsilles, and two to the United Kingdom. Of the total reinforcements in this convoy

the B. I. vessels alone carried upwards of 30,000 native soldiers and their officers.

During the first ten weeks of the war no less than sixty troopships of the B. I. Company left Indian ports with troops, and, besides men, these necessarily carried equipment and a certain amount of land transport.

There are unfortunately no details available of the number of draught animals carried westward, but during the war 83,870 horses were brought from Australia to India in B. I. ships, with a mortality among them of only 3·99 per cent. Not only had horses, more or less docile and trained, to be transported; there were also some thousands of mules, sullen of temper and not easy to handle, besides a great number of camels.

To deliver horses more or less fit for work after a long sea voyage is no easy matter. Often there was an urgent call for draught and cavalry horses, and much depended upon the condition in which they arrived.

One officer commanding troops, referring to the carriage of a complete Battery R.F.A., with 180 horses, wrote:

“The transport of horses through the Red Sea will at all times be a matter of difficulty if the

horses are to arrive in a condition fit for service. . . . We have lost only one horse between Bombay and Marseilles, and this excellent result is largely due to the assistance I have received from Captain —— and his officers.”

This is one of many similar reports which are on the Company's files.

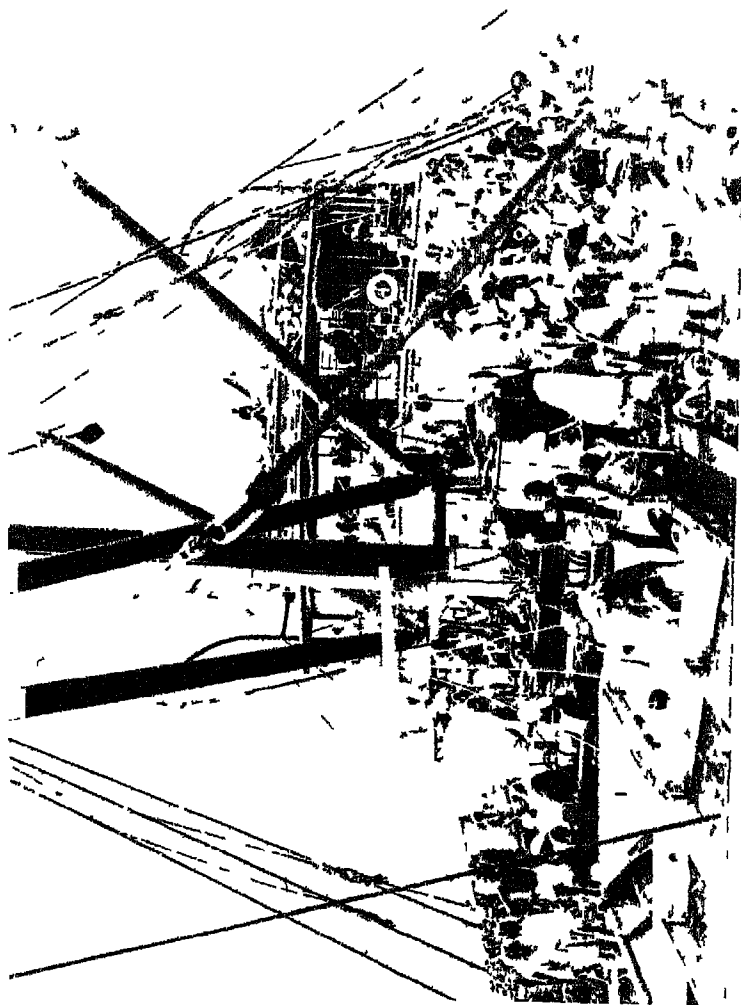
The matter of exercise, sometimes possible only between decks, had always to be cared for; ventilation of the horse decks, particularly in the heat of the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, was a subject of more than a little concern. Some ships had a mortality as low as 1 per cent., some suffered no loss at all. Where deaths occurred they were usually traceable to specific and unavoidable causes.

With the beginning of operations in Mesopotamia, one of the first needs that had to be met was that for shallow craft of all sorts for transport work among the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates. A certain number were on the spot. Others were taken where they could be found, for there was at first no time to construct them. Light draught stern-wheelers, light draught paddle-steamers, and steam floats from the Nile, the Hooghly, and the Irrawaddy, with barges from the nearer ports, were all impressed. These vessels,

even where they had steam-power, were incapable of sustaining an ocean voyage by reason both of their frailty and limited fuel capacity, and had therefore to be towed. In this work of towage ten of the B. I. Company's smaller steamers did most useful work. Even those steamers which were left to the Company, and were following their usual round, carrying cargo between Eastern ports, were frequently used for the towage of all sorts of smaller craft, ranging from paddle-steamers and tugs to lighters and hospital barges.

Of the numerous fleet of small craft possessed by the B. I. and P. and O. Companies at the outbreak of war—tenders, launches, mail-boats, cargo and water boats, tugs, coal barges, hulks, bholios, dredgers, ash-boats, store-boats, etc.—a large proportion, after a period of hire, were purchased outright by the Government, and arrangements had immediately to be undertaken to replace these craft, whose function, at the Companies' stations on the coasts of India, the Persian Gulf, and Burmah, in the Islands of Ceylon and Mauritius, was to attend upon the Companies' liners. Other and even more urgent constructional work of this description was the building in the Companies' yards of a considerable number of river craft and





S S ' GREGORY APCAR ' (B I COMPANY) INHABITING COOLIES AT VIZAGAPALAM



barges on Government account for the Basra River services.

The Mazagon Dockyard at Bombay, with an area of thirty-four acres, a river frontage of 1,150 feet, and employing nearly 8,000 hands under a numerous European technical staff, was, needless to say, made full use of during the war. Besides the fitting out of transports and the building of craft for Mesopotamia, already alluded to, heavy repair-work on warships and naval cruisers was undertaken, and the transformation of passenger and cargo liners into boarding ships, armed merchant cruisers, or hospital ships, formed no small part of the varied enterprise of the war period.

The enormous amount of work needed could not all be done at Bombay; the B.I. Company's repair establishment at Howrah (Calcutta), which covers five and a quarter acres, comprising slipways, dry docks, and extensive workshops, and employs a daily average of 1,320 men, was also kept going at full swing throughout the war.

Some of the work disposed of was of especial interest. A steamer on Government charter, which had struck a mine at Aden, and badly damaged the forward part of her hull, was patched

up at Suez, then brought to Bombay and there docked. The damage necessitated the cutting away of the ship's forward structure from the main deck down to and including the keel plate, and the unshipping of the fore and main masts. In this unstable condition she remained, with her fore deck supported by props or shores, until it became possible to bolt into position the plates and bulbs which, after some months, had begun to arrive from England. She was thoroughly re-conditioned, and to complete her for sea a gun platform and a Marconi house were erected, and a wireless outfit installed.

A badly damaged steamer of excessive length entailed the extension of one of the Company's dry-docks. She was floated into the dock at high water, but as her stern projected beyond the dry-dock gates, these remained open, admitting each successive flood-tide; gradually between tides a wall, or bund, connected to the existing dock, was formed around the stern of the ship, and the tide excluded. The work of reconstructing her within the improvised dock was then put in hand, and she went to sea practically a new ship. But for congestion of work arising from the war, such an operation in dry-dock construction at Calcutta

would not have been thought of, nor would it have been needed.

It became necessary in the conduct of the river campaign to provide a floating workshop so that certain urgent repairs could be done on the spot. The B.I. Company's disused steamer *Abydos* offered a sound hull for this purpose. She was placed in the Company's Union Dock, and there completely transformed within, fitted with forges, a complete range of machine tools, and an erecting shop. Provided with skilled Chinese labour recruited by the Company from Singapore, she was finally sent away to Basra under the technical chieftainship of the Company's Deputy Superintendent Engineer, Mr. W. McR. Campbell.

In behalf of the War Loan, for which subscriptions were invited in June, 1918, a great and successful effort was made by the committee in Calcutta. A war "tank" was constructed in the Company's workshops especially for the occasion, and placed at the disposal of the committee. The tank was safely navigated throughout its mission by two of the Company's engineers, and proved a good advertisement for the loan. A special visit to the Hooghly district of Calcutta in November produced Rs. 1,63,658. The tank's best

month was September, when, of rupees, it secured 6½ lac.

At Secbopore, Calcutta, the Company owned auxiliary engineering works known as the Albion Foundry. This establishment, with the manager and staff, was placed at Government disposal in July, 1915, without charge. Under the Munitions Department the Albion Foundry became the Albion Shell Factory. Here, just a year after war began, the first 18-pounder Q.F. h.e. shell made in India was completed, and from this factory went the first consignment of these shells to be shipped from India. From that time onwards shells of various calibre, including 13-pounder ammunition and 2.75-inch shell, were turned out in immense numbers; and not only shell, but waggon and cart axles, fittings for gun carriages and transport waggons; even saddles, field tools, brass-work, and many other articles of military use were made here too.

This is one side of the Company's activities; at the other end of the scale are the hospitals and hospital ships. The latter are dealt with elsewhere.

By the beginning of the year 1916 there had arisen a great scarcity of hospital accommodation on the Bombay side, all the existing hospitals in



B I COMPANY'S NEW OFFICES AT KARACHI, ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FOR USE  
AS A HOSPITAL DURING THE W W P





Bombay being filled, as the sick and wounded from Mesopotamia poured in. Apart from this, the authorities were anxious to increase the accommodation at Karachi, in order that the hospital ships might turn round there and so avoid the passage to Bombay during the monsoon. The British India Company had just put up new office buildings at Karachi at a cost of 2½ lacs of rupees; these were almost finished, and were offered by Lord Inchcape, free of charge, to the Indian Government as a military hospital. The necessary alterations were made, equipment provided for 300 patients, and the building put in commission for the treatment of sick and wounded Indian soldiers. This hospital was later visited by the Viceroy and by Lord Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, and was said by a high military medical authority to be the finest hospital of its kind in India.

## CHAPTER IV

### SERVICE, HONOURS, AND AWARDS

THE P. and O. Service, as a career for youngsters who have heard and answered the call of the sea, has ever had special attractions. The traffic of the P. and O. Company is peculiar in that its ships ply almost exclusively between the mother country in the West and the gates of British Empire in the East. There are to be found on board its vessels, in their comings and goings, the men whose work and wisdom make, in the grand aggregate, for British prestige and for British freedom and justice among the native races with whose destinies Great Britain stands charged. Every P. and O. passenger list is a mosaic of British activities, official and unofficial, in the vast and populous regions of the Eastern seas. It is inevitable that a maritime service so constituted should have produced among its officers and officials a corporate tradition and individual quality remarkable in character and degree; that

its personnel should be deeply impregnated with the sense of empire citizenship and the privileges and duties which that citizenship implies; and that in a field where two men may serve for a lifetime and never meet face to face, the pride in a house-flag which is something more than the flag of a house may yet hold men in an unseen bond of fellowship.

Of 400 certificated navigating officers and 600 engineer officers on the P. and O. Company's seniority list, many who held His Majesty's commission as officers of the Royal Naval Reserve were immediately mobilized. Many others of the shore or office staffs sought and were granted temporary commissions in the Navy or Army. The active service of these officers was of wide and varied range. One sends "chin-chin" from Savannah by a former shipmate; he is acting as examination officer of neutral steamers—not a gorgeous or dangerous task, but he is doing his duty. Another, an ex-P. and O. officer, is the first to wreck and destroy a Zeppelin, and thereby to win the Victoria Cross. Another, with the local rest of his breed, surprised at breakfast by the unheralded approach of hostile Moslems, mounts a 3-pounder on his house-launch and goes

forth to battle (which was none of his job). One is found, first in Mediterranean ports, and then in the Gulf of Suez, giving freely of his experience for the aid of unaccustomed, but quickly proficient, transport officers—for every port has its whims and fancies, and will work best if worked in the right way. Another emerges from the war as the modest but decorated commander and scribe of "Q" boats and their adventures. In the transport service of all the British armies, in flotilla command of mine-sweepers on wintry northern waters, or cruising, the year round, from East Coast to Skager Rack in crazy craft masquerading as ships of war—one sees them going about their business in war-time. One, among the youngest of its recipients, earns the Victoria Cross for braving the hell of Turkish shrapnel and machine-gun fire to make good the landing of certain Britons from overseas at the Dardanelles. He survived that day, but is claimed by the gods ere the war is done.

Men begin to-day to envisage the great silent work of the Navy and the deadly grip of the blockade against the incoming of food, goods, or munitions to Germany, and against the outgoing from Germany's shores of the death-dealing raider

or submarine mine-layer. There were for these would-be services of the enemy three, sometimes four, gauntlets to be run. Along these far-flung, preventive, watching lines were scattered, individually or in squadrons, small, swift ships of the mercantile marine, many of which were commanded and manned by men drawn from the merchant service. The story of the armed boarding steamers in the North Sea will doubtless be told some day, but the periodical refit was never more welcome than to the men who, throughout the war, bore the strain, during many successive spells of days and nights, of examination work, when the examining steamer, standing by to await the return of its boat from the boarded ship, offered a mark for enemy submarine or disguised raider which a P. and O. officer engaged in that service has likened to that presented by a sitting hen. The P. and O. Company's *India* was "got" in some such circumstances, and among those who gave up their lives in that ship were five officers of her original P. and O. complement, all officers of the Royal Naval Reserve. In this armed boarding work one P. and O. officer, in succession to a post-captain, R.N., is officially appointed senior officer in command of a squadron, and his success

in tackling the matter of general organisation and a varied administrative routine is officially recorded by the conferment of a D.S.O., an honour shared by a brother P. and O. officer engaged alongside of him in the same branch of service. One is present at the Falkland Islands battle, later serves in a battleship, and also gains the D.S.O.; another commands a whaler in an onslaught upon the German East African coast, and is awarded the D.S.C.; another is for a time port-captain at Gibraltar. One, after several times vainly offering himself for service, is accepted midway in the war, and, as a soldier, does good seaman's work in helping the organisation of the cross-Channel train-ferries.

As senior intelligence officers in ports abroad, in command of His Majesty's minor ships of greater or lesser degree, serving as officers in battleships or cruisers of capital significance, in submarines or mine-layers, in the attack on the Mole at Zeebrugge—as one's eye roves, fascinated, up and down the record, these and a number of minor services appear. A hundred apprentices or cadets of the P. and O. or British India services were commissioned as Midshipmen, R.N.R., and entries such as “died on active service,” “killed at the

Battle of Jutland," tell how these and their seniors, in common with the rest of their kind, offered and, as the winnowing in many cases chanced, yielded their lives in the service of King and Country.

Another, a P. and O. commander, is made responsible for the reorganisation of the net barrage of the Irish Sea. This is followed by promotion to chief of the admiral's staff; later he is charged with convoy assembly at his official base, and with its ramified organisation. Seated in the cabin of a battered "Q" sailing ship (he had had a hand in the scheme under which these particularly offensive vessels were brought into being), one finds him questioning the commander of a sunken submarine, and, with the aid of a concealed shorthand writer, securing information which sharp naval brains were presently to turn to practical account, to the enemy's under-water discomfiture.

The incident may, perhaps, be further briefly alluded to :

The work of the "Q" sailing ships was effective, for two or three quickly successive meetings with these craft made German submarine "bravoes" chary of attacking defenceless windjammers, at least in an area of some hundreds of square miles about the port on which these little "mystery

ships" were based. In the twilight of a spring evening in 1917 the Lieutenant, R.N.R., in command of the "PQ," sighted an enemy submarine on a parallel course two miles distant. Ten minutes later the submarine bore down upon her intended victim and opened fire with two guns. The sailing vessel was brought into the wind, and the "panic party," consisting of six persons (the probable crew of such a vessel), "abandoned ship," with orders to linger near the "PQ," and so induce the submarine to approach. The enemy, firing without haste, continued, as desired, to close. The "PQ," her crew lying by their masked guns, took her punishment in silence: her wireless room was wrecked, her quiescent motors were put out of action, all her living rooms shattered, her mainmast was shot through in two places, and the lubricating tank, holed by a splinter, began to pour its contents on to the fire-swept deck. Worst of all, she was twice pierced at the water-line, and water was pouring freely into her hold. She continued to yaw about, apparently without control, and gave no sign. The enemy, who had approached from dead astern to within 150 yards, now altered his course, until at a distance of 80 yards he was more or less abeam. The moment had come; the tense restraint was ended. As the order was obeyed to down screens and open fire at point-blank range, the enemy loosed off both his guns, one shot wounding three of the "PQ's" heroic crew, and wrecking a Lewis gun, the other penetrating her hull at the water-line and passing upwards through the deck. Two seconds later the enemy's forward gun was blown to pieces, and its



crew annihilated, by a shot from the "PQ's" after 12-pounder, while the remaining Lewis gun swept twenty-five men from his deck. As the submarine at full surface speed commenced to run, a second shot from the "PQ's" after gun blew her conning-tower into the sea; a third shot put her engines out of action; but with way on she continued to forge ahead. Six hundred yards away she came to a standstill. The "PQ's" after gun continued to find the target until the submarine, listing badly, and on fire within, settled down, and with one last rolling exposure of her wrecked conning-tower, disappeared from view. Three survivors were picked up, including the commander. The "PQ" had fired thirty-six rounds, registering about twenty hits. Her active part in the fight had lasted exactly four minutes.

The commander of the "PQ," Lieutenant Saunders, R.N.R., was awarded the V.C. and the Distinguished Service Cross. He had come from New Zealand to lend a hand in the war. With regret it is recorded that he fell ere the war was done.

Sometimes the service called for was of a sufficiently delicate and tortuous kind. Information was received that parcels of a rare mineral were finding their way into Germany. Naval authorities, by means of a little knowledge and some imagination, formed a theory as to how this was being done, the outcome of which was the despatch of a fast armed merchant cruiser—in com-

mand of one who in peace-time was a P. and O. captain—to watch a certain coast. The fixed points in the problem were a port of loading and a rendezvous of unknown locality. The movements of a sailing vessel which carried regular consignments of cement in bags had become the subject of naval curiosity. This ship and her cargoes really constituted a clever screen. The false scent having been disposed of, the real carrier was spotted lying in the suspected loading port. All doubt was removed when a member of the British ship's crew returned from a night visit ashore, and reported the discovery, inside a slit bag of cement in the loading shed, of a small parcel of the contraband mineral. The watching ship stood off by day and on by night, always in touch with any possible departure from the port, always out of sight of the port itself; but the network of the enemy intelligence service made the fact of her continued vicinity impossible to be long concealed.

Attempts were then made by enemy agents to discover her mission. Although the date was late in the war, it occurred to certain kindly souls in a port which was known to be occasionally visited by the watching steamer to open a

“sailors’ home,” chiefly for the entertainment of British seamen whose work kept them captive in these waters. The commander of the watching steamer attended the opening ceremony, made a speech of congratulation, and, for good reasons, promptly put the institution out of bounds. With the aid of certain good ladies of the port, who organised an alternative entertainment for the idle British sailor in the shape of the hospitality of their own pretty serving-maids and kitchens, the snare was avoided.

At last it came to the knowledge of our blockader that the suspected ship was well on with her loading, and would soon sail. At the same moment, his stores having run short, he was under the imperative necessity of breaking off his watch for a four days’ run to and from his usual supply station. Having pondered the position with some chagrin, he set out to renew his supplies, but before doing so “imagined” that a strike of the stevedores attending on the suspect might occur, and so chain her to the quay until the date of his return. The strike happened! A naval commander under another flag was also lying in wait for the blockade runner. Both knew that she must soon leave port, and to each fell the task of imagining where, at

sea, he might fall in with her. The English skipper guessed rightly; he concluded she would keep in territorial waters during the day, and, for the avoidance of the dangerous coast in the hours of darkness, would make a big loop to seaward at night. At 1 o'clock in the morning he caught the delinquent in the full glare of his searchlight, and, after an ineffectual hail, put a shot at close range between her masts, which brought her up with a round turn. Twenty minutes later the blockade runner's entire crew were prisoners in the boarding steamer, whose skipper knew that his prize contained 300 tons of contraband, valued at £300 a ton. Again his imagination did not fail him, but a boarding party sent to close the captured ship's sea-cocks was too late. The crew of neutral seamen, which included a German supercargo, had acted with the usual thoroughness of Germany's servants. The possibility of capture had been foreseen, and quick scuttling provided for; wooden plugs to a considerable number had been driven in holes cut in the ship's hull below the water-line, and these, in addition to the opening of the sea-cocks, had been removed at the first alarm. The ship took in water rapidly, and her captor saw there was no chance of keeping her

afloat. But, at least, he had got the master and crew.

Here the reader must pardon a gap in the story.

A few weeks later, a German submarine which had been accustomed, at a certain rendezvous, to receive parcels of a certain mineral for conveyance to the Fatherland, took in an unexpected shipment in the shape of a torpedo from a British submarine, and sank with all hands; and this particular channel of German commerce was, for the time being, interrupted.

The story is told with the necessary suppression of names and localities, but affords one more instance of the ability of the British navy, during the war, to overtake the elusive truth and turn it to account.

Vessels of the P. and O. and British India Companies had for many years been employed in bringing home time-expired troops from India and in conveying relieving troops outwards, so that the nucleus of a transport service was always available. Through this branch many of the Companies' officers had passed successively, gaining experience which was to prove of value in the war.

From the P. and O. fleet 341 navigating or engineer officers, who held or received commis-

sioned rank, passed into service as combatants; the greater proportion to the Royal Navy, some few to the land or air forces. With them, as has been shown, went a number of the P. and O. ships in which they had been accustomed to serve. From the Company's shore establishments 191 members passed, almost without exception, into the armies.

On the Indian side, the British India fleet was largely requisitioned for trooping purposes, and officers and engineers were best retained at their posts in the ships so employed. But even so, the British India Company's staff afloat and ashore contributed 190 of its members towards the officering of the active naval or military forces, and from both P. and O. and B. I. services a much greater number, including many members of the workshop, stewards, and deck departments volunteered for service in the ranks with the colours or on the lower deck in H.M. ships.

The list of honours is neither short nor unimpressive. Of sea-officers and shore officials of the P. and O. and B. I. Companies sixty-one laid down their lives. In the course of a long and deadly war, few of the survivors escaped without wounds: some were several times wounded; and some

suffered hurts which time, within their life's duration, will not obliterate.

Two officers of the P. and O. Company, and other two who were formerly in that Company's service, gained the Victoria Cross; six P. and O. officers and one official were awarded the D.S.O. Commanders, officers, or officials of the P. and O. or British India services to the number of fifteen received the Distinguished Service Cross; three earned the companionship of the Order of the British Empire (military division); officership (military division) of the same order was conferred on nine, while the same honour (civil) was awarded to three commanders, one chief engineer and three members of the associated Companies' administration. On eight members of the P. and O. Company's office staff the M.C. was bestowed. Of commanders, officers, or officials of the two Companies who were mentioned in official despatches the number was twenty—one official was three times mentioned; seven were decorated by the Serbian Government; one received the Croix de Guerre; one the rank of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour; one the Greek Order of the Redeemer; seven were recipients of Lloyd's, and four of the Royal Humane Society's, medals.

Six navigating or engineer officers of the P. and O. service were mentioned in official commendations. To this enumeration must be added honours, noted elsewhere in this volume, to officers of other associated companies.

From the associated fleets named on the title-page there were lost in all 874 lives, including 175 passengers, the latter sacrificed by enemy attacks on the *Persia*, *Maloja*, *Mongolia* and *Nyanza*.

Eight of the B. I. Company's commanders, officers, or engineers went, on board enemy submarines, into captivity of longer or lesser duration; all were eventually released.

In the course of their employment twelve officers or engineers of the P. and O. fleet, and nineteen officers or engineers of the B. I. fleet, lost their lives through submarine attack or mine damage. From the same cause 78 European and 415 native seamen or firemen of the P. and O. or B. I. fleets were killed, drowned, or died of wounds.



## CHAPTER V

### ASSOCIATED COMPANIES: A GENERAL SURVEY

MAIL and passenger steamers may be ranked as the aristocrats of the mercantile marine; their relatively high speed involves the carriage and consumption of a considerable amount of fuel and the appropriation of much of their hold space to high-powered machinery and boilers. For these reasons their capacity for cargo is small. To this class belong some of the steamers of the New Zealand, Federal and Union Steamship Companies, but these, as well as the P. and O. and British India Companies, own a number of steamers of limited passenger accommodation and large cargo capacity which are, because of these characteristics and of the regularity of their movements, known in the shipping trade as "cargo liners." They are very comfortable ships to travel in if one is not in a hurry; their cabins and saloons are usually placed high up in the middle of the ship's length. They have the added charm of wide, uncrowded decks, and their

appointments, service, and catering are usually subject for appreciative comment.

But let the reader make no mistake. The passenger traffic by which, to an appreciable extent, the mail steamer earns her living largely results from the international exchange of commodities and raw materials carried on by the cargo liner and tramp steamer. Out of this arises a great proportion of the banking and insurance business of the Empire, and, what is more to the point, a great many journeyings by individuals who are concerned to travel overseas in the prosecution of their particular branch of trade.

The steamers of the New Zealand Shipping Company and its associate, the Federal Line, are mostly of the special type necessary for the carriage of full cargoes of perishable food-stuffs. Such steamers are permanent testimony of the inability of these islands, unaided, to produce sufficient food, even in peace time, to satisfy the needs of a population which is largely industrial and only in a lesser degree agricultural or pastoral. The value of the work they did, taken for granted in peace time, was enhanced by the outbreak of war; and that they should continue in their ordinary trade was from the first

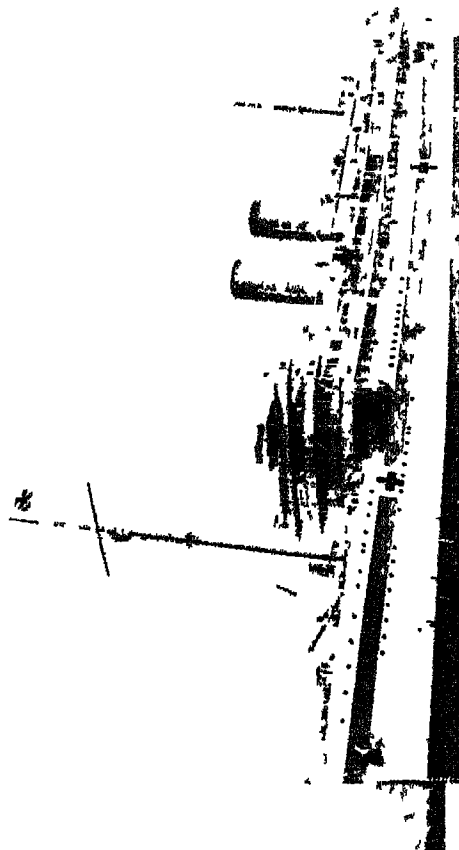
inevitable. Advantage was at the earliest moment taken of the opening of the Panama Canal in order to shorten the transit of these vessels between the United Kingdom and the Dominion of New Zealand, and their productivity was by this change proportionately increased. These ships, like others, had to run the gauntlet. Of the New Zealand Shipping Company's vessels, one, the *Kaipara*, fell a victim in the first fortnight of the war to a German raider in the Atlantic; the *Tongariro* was wrecked off the Bull Rock a year later; between March, 1917, and May, 1918, three—the *Rotorua*, *Turakina*, and *Hurunui*—were torpedoed in the English Channel, while the *Otaki* was sunk on the 10th of March, 1917, after a fight with the raider *Moewe*, the story of which is told elsewhere in these records.

The *Norfolk*, belonging to the Federal Company, which had loaded in New York in September, 1914, took fire in November while at sea off Melbourne, and was destroyed. It is not impossible that her destruction was due to enemy action during the stowage of her cargo in New York.

The *Middlesex* and *Cumberland*, new steamers, met their fate in May and June, 1917, the former by torpedo attack 200 miles from the west coast

of Ireland, the latter at the Antipodes by striking one of the *Wolf's* mines. The *Somerset* was torpedoed and sank off Finisterre on the 25th of July, 1917. Thus, in three years ten of the New Zealand and Federal Companies' vessels had gone, and the capacity of the nation's food-carriers had been reduced by 80,000 gross tons.

The Union Steamship Company of New Zealand owned seventy-seven steamers at the beginning of the war, including three building; one of these latter, a mail steamer of 15,000 tons register, transformed in the process of building into an armed merchant cruiser and re-named the *Avenger*, was sunk by torpedo attack on the 14th of June, 1917—fortunately with the loss of only one life. She was to have been the most luxurious steamer yet designed for the Pacific trade. Six other vessels, including the *Aparima*, with a grievous loss of young life, were sunk by torpedo attack during the war; one, the *Wairuna*, referred to elsewhere, was captured, plundered, and sunk by the raider *Wolf*; the *Maitui* was wrecked at Raratonga in December, 1916, and the *Waitatara* was burnt *en route* between Fiji and Sydney in June, 1917. So this company lost six steamers, or, in gross measurement, 62,000 tons.



THE "OREGON" (P AND O AUSTRALIAN MAIL) IS A HONOLULU

1 0 0 1 1 1



As mentioned elsewhere, the ordinary mail service to Australia via Suez was discontinued during the war, and the Union Company's routes from Vancouver and San Francisco, in conjunction with the connecting Atlantic and Canadian services, provided a second line of communication with Australia and New Zealand, fortified by the all-sea route of the New Zealand Shipping Company.

The Hain Steamship Company, called after the Hain family of St. Ives, Cornwall, had thirty-four steamers in commission and five being built when the war began. Eighteen of these, or more than half, were lost by enemy action and four by peril of the sea.

The Mercantile Steamship Company possessed fourteen steamers and lost eleven.

These steamers were of the class known as "tramps"; and if special honour must be conceded to any one portion of the British mercantile marine that special honour must be granted to the tramp and to the tramp skipper and his men. Lacking the turn of speed necessary to effective flight, and coming late into the scheme of defensive armament, the tramps yet continued to ply on the ocean roads, taking their turn in the danger zone

as it might befall; they patiently toiled through storm and shine as bulk carriers of sugar, grain, maize, ore, steam, coal, pit-wood, etc., and their safe arrivals often signified more for the Ministry of Munitions or the Food Controller than those of ships of superior type. The Hain and Mercantile steamers were no exception, and later on in this book some of their submarine encounters will be found in detail.

Four of the Hain Company's commanders, Captains E. J. Couch, Fred Uren, Thos. Strike, and Clifford Lower, earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the first-named gaining also the Cross of the Russian Order of St. George and the French Légion d'Honneur. Captain A. J. Coles of the Mercantile Company was for some time employed in the Dover command in mine-sweeping, and after he had narrowly escaped drowning by the sinking of his ship, was awarded a decoration for bravery and appointed a marine superintendent of trawlers and mine-sweepers at Dover.

The *Tremorah* of the Hain Company was the first relief ship to carry food-stuffs and clothing in the service of the Belgian Relief Committee.

It must be remembered that when the war broke out these steamers were widely scattered—



some were in waters already hostile or soon to become so, and the wonder is that only three failed to make good their escape; one of these, the *Trevorion*, was in the Sea of Azov, and was cut off by the closing of the Dardanelles (she was afterwards requisitioned and sold to the Russian Government); two, discharging in German ports, were interned. But ten vessels at ports within the Dardanelles actually reached open waters and got home again; fourteen of the thirty-four ships in commission returned in ballast. The ships of the Hain and Mercantile Companies were largely used by the Admiralty as transports or colliers.

Mention has been made of the *Trevorian*. Her master and some of the crew passed with the ship into the service of the Russian Admiralty. In October, 1916, she was lying off Kustendjie (Constanza) discharging guns, ammunition, and aeroplanes. The German Army was fast getting nearer, and their advance guard, in the shape of aeroplanes, began to drop bombs daily. The ship presented a stationary target and her position was far from being pleasant, but she was not hit. On the 22nd, her master received orders from the Russian admiral to put to sea after all possible reloading of stores. At 1 p.m. the Russian fleet

sailed, but there were still a number of refugees to be taken, and the master of the *Trevorian*, true to his nationality, held on alone. Late in the afternoon, with 500 passengers, including the French, British, and Russian consuls, women and children, members of the Red Cross, and officers and men of the Russian and Roumanian armies, crowding every available space in the ship, he got under way, towing a barge containing machine guns and 2,000 live shell! The enemy artillery was by this time in full blast, and high explosive and shrapnel were dropping all around the ship. Again she escaped being hit. Then the barge fouled the port boom, and there was nothing to do but cast her adrift, so one anxiety was gone; but there was another lying in wait outside the harbour in the shape of an enemy submarine. Eluding the submarine, the *Trevorian* got clear away, and soon was picked up by craft detached from the Russian squadron for her protection. But what an experience for a peaceful merchant seaman!

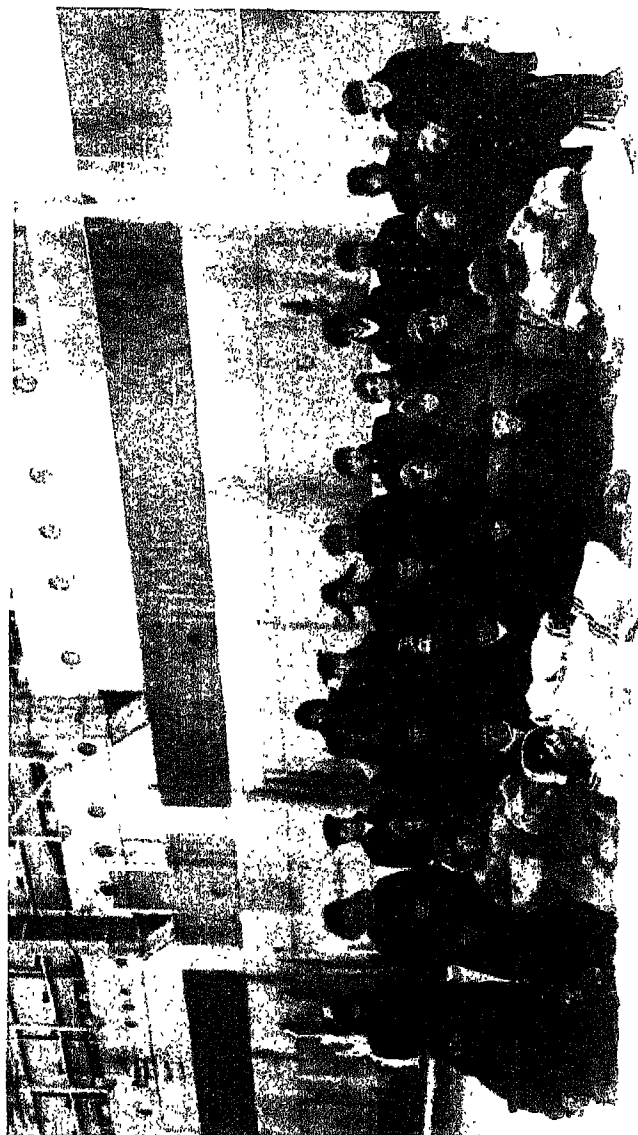
## CHAPTER VI

### HOSPITAL SHIPS

It is obvious at once that while some of the steamers of peace could be and were transformed into armed cruisers, they could never be perfect fighting ships, and that their chief usefulness would be as transports or hospital ships. Of the transport work something has already been told, but the hospital work was equally valuable. Squeezed in the ice of the far north, sweltering in the heat of Mesopotamia, to and fro on their dangerous passages, laden with sick and wounded, went the hospital ships. They were, of course, marked out in all the gay distinctiveness arranged by the Convention of Geneva: the long green line on the white sides, the huge scarlet crosses by day-time, and at night the brilliant row of flashing lights, so gorgeous when all else crept about the dark water in total extinction. But it was found that these signs were not only utterly disregarded, but that they exposed the ships to

more danger than if they had not worn them; by 1917, when the Geneva Convention had, for Germany, become a dead letter, it was decided to convert many of the hospital ships into ambulance transports; that is, while they retained their fittings, resources, and personnel as hospital ships, they were painted like ordinary Admiralty transports, the distinctive marks being entirely abandoned. In this state they could, without any breach of the Convention, be utilised for the conveyance of troops, stores, munitions, etc., or for the carriage of sick and wounded. This conversion provided an immediate and considerable increase of tonnage for the former purpose.

There is no one now who does not realise that among non-combatants of whatever class none can lay higher claim to valour than those who have worked under the symbol of the Red Cross. In the sanguinary struggles of the opposing armies, surgeons, nurses, and orderlies have often been within range of enemy artillery or bombing machines, sometimes within the area of hostile rifle fire. And let no one think that those afloat have escaped more easily. Those serving in hospital ships, and in their attendant craft, had to pass much of their time within the zone of danger.



DOCTORS AND NURSES OF H.M. HOSPITAL SHIP "KALYAN."



At the first Dardanelles landing units of the Companies' fleets employed under the Red Cross lay for many hours, some for days, within the zone of fire, receiving their sad freight of maimed humanity. Masters tell of shell-pierced boats, half full of tinted water, chased right up to the ship's side by enemy artillery; of the embarkation of wounded under bursts of shrapnel or high explosive and the shifting of anchorage under fire to a safer place of transfer; of long periods of continuous service in the North Sea at the time when the enemy was sinking hospital ships wherever he could find them; of weary days and nights in tropical heat on the *Shatt-el-Arab* as the convoys of sick and wounded filtered slowly down-stream from the distant front.

The *China*, *Sicilia*, and *Soudan*, under P. and O. commanders and manned by P. and O. crews, served throughout the war as naval hospital ships; the *Syria*, as a hospital ship in connection with the Mesopotamian campaign.

In June, 1916, the *China* had the honour of a visit from the King "during his stay with the fleet." The commander reported that His Majesty spoke in high terms of the ship, and expressed his pleasure that she had been spared to do such splendid work.'

The *Egypt*, *Morea*, *Delta*, *Devanha*, and *Dongola* were employed in the hospital service for varying periods during the war. The *Kalyan* saw exceptional service, for she went north, was frozen in the Arctic ice throughout the long winter night of 1918-19, and became, for the time being, a shore base hospital. This was of no disadvantage to the sick or wounded British soldiers, for the medical and curative resources of a British hospital ship in winter and the skill of her staff of surgeons and nurses (those of the *Kalyan* may be seen in the accompanying illustrations) were in all probability at least not inferior to the best arrangements available ashore.

In June, 1917, H.M. Hospital Ship No. 4 (the P. and O. Company's s.s. *Plassy*) also received a visit from the King. On arrival at the port at which the *Plassy* was based, His Majesty passed close alongside, when the ship's crew were lined up in a complete "circle," the salute being sounded by bugle and all hands giving three cheers. On the afternoon of Sunday, the 24th of June, the King inspected the ship, and was received at the gangway by Captain E. W. Bruce and Fleet-Surgeon Sutton, R.N. Naval surgeons and nursing sisters of the ship and of the *Garth Castle*,



FIGURE 1. MOUNTAIN (O'DONNELL) NATIVE, THE TULSA





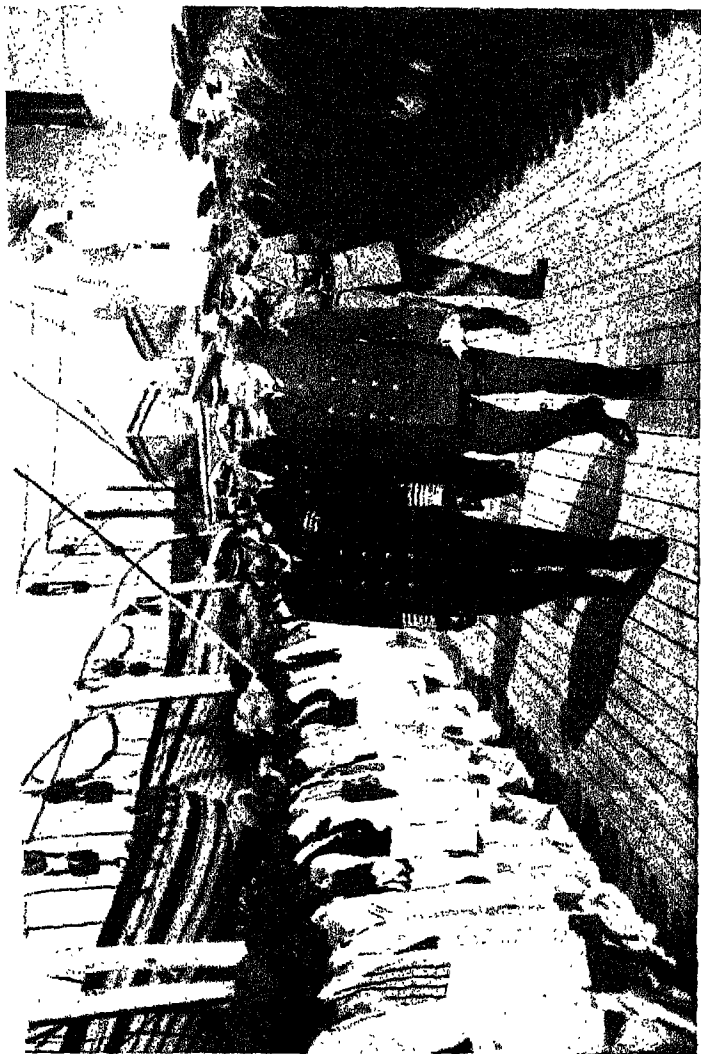
*Agadir*, and *Magic* were assembled on the port side of the hurricane deck and presented. The King then went through all the wards, and thence to the port side of the boat deck, where he spoke with sick naval officers. On the starboard side of the boat deck the entire ship's company were ranged in two inward-facing lines, at the head of which were the commanders of the three ships, with the *Plassy's* officers and engineers. All were presented to the King, who afterwards passed down the lines, and, on leaving, expressed great pleasure with his visit, and remarked on the cleanliness and efficiency of the ship.

On the Indian side, the relation between the British India Company's ships and their managers were of a more constant and intimate character than those of the P. and O. Company and its fleet from the fact that the former Company's ships were usually based at their home ports of Karachi, Bombay, or Calcutta.

Of the *Neuralia* and *Nevasa*, which were taken up by the Admiralty, the former was employed from March to October, 1916, in Indian waters, and thereafter in home waters; the latter from August, 1916, to March, 1918, in conveying sick and wounded from Basra, then from Suez, and later from East

Africa to Bombay. The *Rewa* and *Rohilla*, which, before the war, had been regularly chartered by the home Government for Indian trooping, were employed as hospital ships west of Suez. Both ships, as already mentioned, were unfortunately lost.

Only a few weeks after war had been declared, the people of Madras expressed a desire to offer a hospital ship to the Government of India, and naturally turned to the British India Company for a suitable vessel. The *Tanda*, the first of the Company's Indian fleet to be so employed, was accordingly equipped and fitted, and, that she might be associated with the loyal donors, her name changed to *Madras*. The B. I. Company provided the vessel at a nominal charter rate, and in addition subscribed Rs. 10,000 per month to the Madras War Fund for the upkeep of the staff and equipment of the ship, subsequently increasing this to Rs. 20,000. The *Madras*, on her return with sick and wounded from her maiden trip to East Africa, was pronounced by the medical staff to be an ideal hospital ship. She attended upon the forces in East Africa and Mesopotamia until June, 1918, when the Government of India took her over and converted her



H.M. THE KING INSPECTING THE HOSPITAL SHIP "PLASSY" (P. AND O.), ATTENDED BY HER COMMANDER,  
CAPTAIN E. W. BRUCE.



into an ambulance transport, and in August, 1918, she was despatched to Vladivostock.

The *Takada*, a sister of the *Madras*, was similarly employed by the Government of India for the service of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force from June, 1915, to April, 1917, when she was dismantled and became again a liner.

In August, 1915, the B. I. Company's new passenger steamer *Varela*, specially built for the Persian Gulf trade, was converted by the Royal Indian Marine Dockyard and sailed two months later for Basra, on her first voyage as a hospital ship. Her principal medical officer was Major Markham Carter, who brought to light the unnecessary hardships of the wounded of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. The *Varela* was such a success that the sister ships *Varsova* and *Vita* were also converted in April and May, 1916, respectively. A fourth vessel of the "V" class, the *Vasna*, was completed at home by her builders as a hospital ship, and was immediately chartered by the Admiralty and placed on the Bombay-Basra service in August, 1917. In July and August, 1916, the *Ellora* and *Erinpura* were also fitted as hospital ships for the Bombay-Basra service.

Besides all these, the *Barjora* was temporarily employed as a hospital ship at the close of 1914, off the coast of East Africa, and the *Itonus* as an ambulance carrier at Gallipoli.

The following are extracts from among many expressions of appreciation of the work of commanders, officers and crews in vessels chartered to H.M. Government as hospital ships.

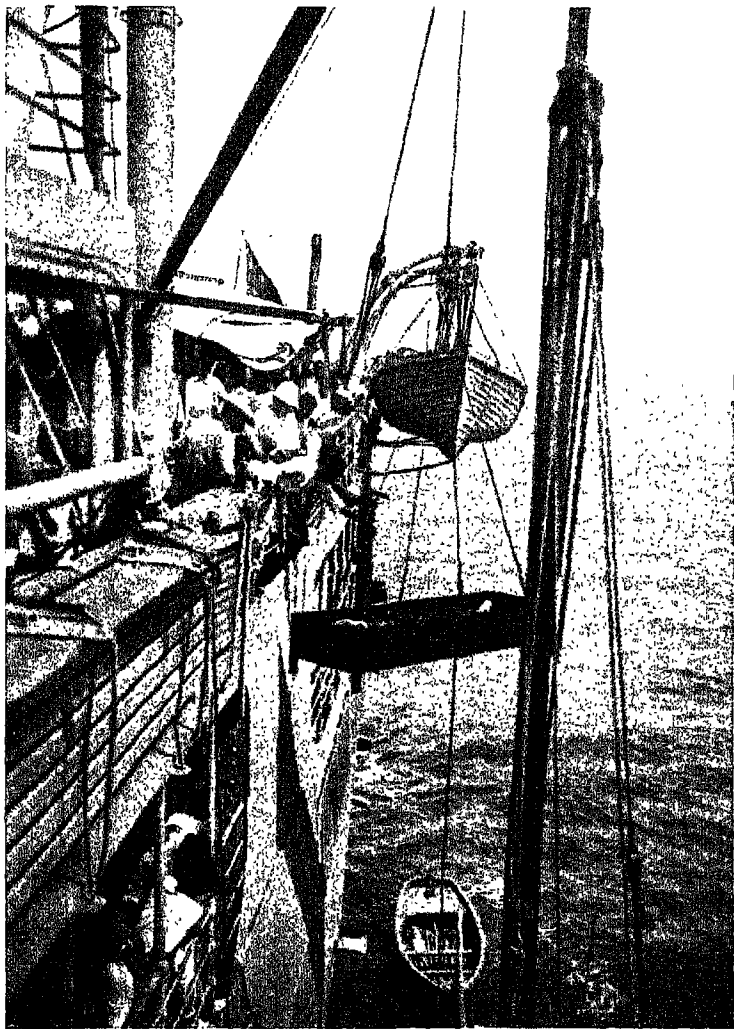
On the 30th of November, 1914, Major G. L. Perry, I.M.S., Senior Medical Officer of the *Varela*, wrote:

"All the wounded and sick, both British and Indians, and a large number of Turks and Arabs, after the actions of the 11th and 15th of November, were brought to this ship. After the battle of Ganjeh, over 180 wounded British officers and men were brought on board. Every difficulty has been met with promptitude and resource by Captain Mills (commanding *Varela*), and his officers. Our wants have always been supplied, and more often than not anticipated. The assistance we have received has enabled us to return large numbers of sick and wounded as effectives to the force within a remarkably short time."

Writing in December, 1915, to Lord Inchcape, Major Markham Carter said:

"I know it will interest you as head of the B. I. S. N. Company to hear of the fine work of





H.M. AMBULANCE TRANSPORT "ERINPURA" (B. I. COMPANY)  
TAKING IN COT CASES.



your officers of H.M.H.S. *Varela*—Captain W. T. Stewart, Mr. H. W. Green, chief officer, Mr. B. Page, auxiliary second officer, Mr. S. P. Savage, third officer, Mr. G. W. Lundie, second officer. It was chiefly due to the valuable assistance rendered by these officers that the embarkation of 328 sick and severely wounded was performed under exceptionally difficult circumstances without a single case being lost from drowning during the evening of the 5th and the night of the 6th of December. I wish to bring to your especial notice the name of Mr. Green, who ingeniously devised the bridge of lashed bhoosa bales and a ship's ramp that enabled us to carry cases of severe shell and gunshot fracture from light boats, swaying in the darkness in a swift river current, into the *Varela*.

“Your officers voluntarily helped us to carry the wounded to our wards. During the forty-eight hours after embarkation when, by reason of diarrhoea, dysentery, bed-sores, and gangrene after exposure to thirteen days on the River Tigris in winter, it was necessary for every patient to be washed, fed, and his wounds dressed, these officers assisted us as dressers in the operating theatre, and performed the duties of ward orderlies during their hours off duty.”

The Government of India also officially expressed appreciation of “the valuable and ready assistance” of the officers concerned.

For their services in command of ambulance

carriers at the Dardanelles, Captain H. Carey of the *Itomus*, Captain A. H. Acheson of the *Neuralia*, and Captain H. A. Sharp of the *Varsora*, were mentioned in despatches in June, 1915; and Captain Carey, for similar service between August and November, 1915, received further from the Lords of the Admiralty an expression of their appreciation of the valuable services rendered by himself, among other shipmasters.

"In the distressful days of August last (1916) at Gallipoli, with its thousands of wounded, had it not been for the loyal, whole-hearted, and unflinching co-operation and support of these shipmasters, their officers, and men, the fatalities and suffering among the wounded must have been vastly increased, congestion of sea-hospital transport would have been inevitable, and the removal of the wounded from under fire sadly and, we doubt not, in many cases fatally, delayed."—The circumstances sketched in the general official report need no amplification.

The *Karapara* was, while still in her builder's hands, offered to, and at once accepted by, the Admiralty as a hospital ship, and was duly fitted out for that purpose, the British India Company undertaking to bear all running expenses throughout her commission. On the 26th of August, 1915, she sailed from the Tyne to South-

ampton for orders. Here she was commissioned for the service of the Army in Gallipoli.

This ship was beautifully finished for her special work in every detail. The holds were coated throughout in white enamel, and elaborately fitted up as hospital wards; the decks covered with green linoleum. The wards were distinguished by initial letters, indicating the general classification of the cases to be assigned to each. Each ward was supplied with fresh water and salt water, both hot and cold, steam for sterilising instruments, steam percolators, electric blowers and fans for hot weather, steam radiators for cold weather; each ward had two bathrooms for infectious cases, besides ample wash-house accommodation. To light the ship, 1,000 electric globes were fitted. On the upper deck were recreation saloons for convalescent patients, surgeons, and nursing sisters; also a pathological laboratory. This proved invaluable in the summer of 1916, when research work was successfully undertaken in order to combat sandfly fever and a severe form of dysentery, both very common on the Gallipoli Peninsula and at Salonica. On the main deck forward were the operating theatre, preparation rooms, the hospital galley, laundry, disinfectant, and, alas!

the mortuary. Stowage for medical stores, drugs, bandages, blankets, sheets, ward utensils, and patients' baggage was provided in the lower holds. The *Karapara* was fitted for 500 patients in cots, and a medical and nursing personnel of 200. She finished her first commission as a military hospital ship in March, 1916, when she was handed back to the Admiralty.

A month later she was again in the Eastern Mediterranean as a naval hospital for the succour of ratings from fighting ships, from the naval air force, from mine-sweepers, and from naval forces serving ashore. Fifteen months later, after again refitting, she became a floating base hospital in the Eastern Mediterranean. In April, 1918, she proceeded to Scapa Flow, and after several months' service in home waters, and a further refit, was once more ordered East. Off the Portuguese coast on the 11th of November, 1918, she received the historic signal, "All British men-of-war and merchant vessels to cease hostilities at noon; submarine precautions to be taken when entering and leaving port only."

When the Allied fleet at length steamed up the Dardanelles, the *Karapara* followed in the wake of the fighting ships and, after three years' service

as a merciful participant in the war, anchored off the Golden Horn. Through her wards had passed many thousands of shattered or sick men from both sides of the belligerent forces, all receiving the same skilled care and tending which it is a characteristic of the fighting Briton to afford to stricken friend and stricken foe without distinction.

## CHAPTER VII

### WARLIKE OPERATIONS

THERE were some instances during the war, apart from submarine attack or armed cruiser work, in which the merchant steamer, serving for the time being as a transport, was called upon to take part in actual fighting. In the case of the landing at Tanga, in November, 1914, some of the B. I. ships, and at least one P. and O. ship, bore a part in the military operations.

The convoy which, as previously mentioned, left Bombay on the 16th of October, included the four British India steamers—*Barjora*, *Pentakota*, *Bharata*, and *Muttra*—and the P. and O. steamer *Karmala* (Headquarters, Indian Expeditionary Force “B”). These ships carried native infantry and artillery and, detached from the main convoy, which went to or beyond Suez, were ordered to German East Africa. On the morning of Monday, 3rd of November, three steamers, including the *Pentakota*, arrived off Tanga. At nightfall the



troops were transferred to lighters and at midnight were landed about a mile and a half from Tanga town, but in a mass of bush so thick that in places it was not possible even by daylight to see more than five yards ahead. At daybreak on Tuesday the advance through this scrub began, having for its object the capture of Tanga. Fierce and unexpected opposition was encountered, and by 8 a.m. the attack was broken off and the little force had to retreat to its base, having sustained many casualties. In the interval other ships of the convoy, including the *Bharata* and *Barjora*, had arrived with reinforcements, and a general advance was made at noon on the following day, Wednesday. By 3.30 p.m. it was seen that the landing of the 28th Mountain Battery of the Royal Artillery, carried by the *Bharata*, would be next to impossible; the six guns were therefore mounted on her boat deck, and she with H.M.S. *Fox* bombarded Tanga town for some hours, thus helping to cover the advance of the troops, both ships being all the time under a raking fire from the enemy batteries ashore. About 5 o'clock in the afternoon there was a call for volunteers to man a boat and fetch wounded from the beach. Two of the *Bharata's* engineers, under the fire of the enemy

guns, pulled ashore, embarked the wounded men, and brought them safely on board.

Meantime our troops had reached the outskirts of Tanga, some few penetrating into the town itself; but the alarm of the previous day had given the Germans time to bring up reinforcements, their defences were alive with machine guns, and by nightfall it was apparent that the force must retire. All troops had been withdrawn to the base by 1 a.m., and at daylight were ordered to return to the transports. Captain O'Connor of the *Barjora* was directed to take his ship as close as possible under the land so that her naval 3-pounders and Gatling gun might cover the troops should the enemy open fire during the movement. The *Bharata* was detailed for temporary service as a hospital ship. For the re-embarking of the troops steam launches and lighters were available, but in insufficient numbers, and life-boats from the B. I. and P. and O. ships, some manned partly, others entirely, by volunteers from the ships, rendered invaluable help. Some delay was enforced by the state of the tide, but by 3.30 p.m. the whole force of 7,000 troops and followers had left the beach, the movement remaining unsuspected by the enemy. In the initial operations of the 3rd of



THE INTRACIABLE NULL



November the 13th Rajputs had sustained heavy casualties among British officers, and Mr. Howard V. Rix, chief officer of the *Pentakota*, volunteered and was attached to the regiment. He was recommended for notice for "gallant conduct, activity, and assistance, rendered under heavy fire."

The services of the ships' boats and their volunteer crews evoked the thanks of the general officer commanding. The marine transport officer of the force wrote to the British India Company's Agents (25th of November, 1914):

"I have the honour to bring to your favourable notice the officers of the transports *Bharata*, *Barjora*, *Pentakota*, and *Muttra*, of your company (as per attached list), who volunteered at my request to help to man the life-boats of their ships for the purpose of re-embarking the expeditionary force at Tanga at a time of great emergency. The assistance and co-operation I received from Captain O'Connor and the officers and crew of the *Barjora* in bringing off the wounded is deserving of the highest praise.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"(Signed) E. J. HEADLAM,

"Commander R.I.M.,

"Marine Transport Officer,

"Indian Expeditionary Force,  
"East Africa."

## H.T. 'BARJORA.'

J. Lentist, 2nd Officer.  
 E. C. Strike, 3rd Officer.  
 A. T. Cauld, 4th Engineer.  
 J. Rasmussen, 5th Engineer.

## H.T. 'PENTAKOTA.'

D. Sinclair, 2nd Officer.  
 W. Shouler, 3rd Officer.  
 D. Shaw, Chief Engineer.  
 C. Wells, 3rd Engineer.  
 G. Martin, 4th Engineer.  
 W. Paterson, 5th Engineer.

## H.T. 'MUTTRA.'

G. Smith, 2nd Officer.  
 E. Lawson, 3rd Officer.  
 A. Cardno, 4th Engineer.  
 J. Wright, 5th Engineer.  
 A. A. Wilson, 5th Engineer.

## H.T. 'BHARATA.'

W. O'Brian, Chief Officer.  
 A. Farret, 3rd Officer.  
 P. Holtham, 3rd Engineer.  
 C. McCaskie, 3rd Engineer.  
 C. Henderson, 4th Engineer.  
 W. Tait, 5th Engineer.

In the boat which brought off Major Ames:

T. Lang, 2nd Officer.  
 P. Holtham, 3rd Engineer.  
 C. Henderson, 4th Engineer."

The East African adventure was only one instance in which transports were actually under fire from shore batteries.

On the Basra River, owing to the nearness of the enemy, and the necessity for landing fighting parties in the ships' boats, the ships themselves were frequently within the zone of the guns.

An early instance was that of the *Umaria* which, in convoy with other vessels, anchored at Fao on the 6th of October, 1914, after H.M.S. *Odin* had silenced the forts. The subsequent landing

of the troops was quiet, no sign being seen of the enemy, and the British flag was hoisted on the Turkish telegraph office the same day. On the 7th the troops returned to the ships, leaving 200 men to guard Fao, while the convoy, including the *Umaria*, proceeded farther up the river and anchored for the night. As the *Umaria* was taking up her anchorage, the enemy opened fire on the ship. Machine guns and 10-pounders on board in the hands of the troops replied, and the firing soon ceased. Next morning a landing party blew up the Turkish custom-house.

This experience showed the necessity of putting the ship in some state of defence. Her bridge was therefore strengthened against rifle fire by a double sheathing of corrugated iron, filled in with coal dust, placed at each end, and the face of the bridge was lined with bags of flour; two machine guns were mounted on the lower bridge, which was also protected with bags of flour and bales of hay. On the boat deck two 10-pounder mountain guns were erected, but to enable these to be worked the sun deck above had to be removed. Two of the ship's life-boats were, moreover, fitted with machine guns, for use by the military in covering the landing of troops.

The *Ellora*, Captain P. W. Lyne, arrived at Basra Outer Bar on the 13th of December, 1914, with the 33rd Indian Cavalry, supply and transport details, and proceeded the following day to Abadan. The cavalry were badly needed, for a sharp and victorious action by our troops in the early morning had been nullified for want of mounted troops to follow it up. The *Ellora's* cavalry were disembarked, and a second attack on the 17th was pushed farther afield. On the morning of the 18th, the *Ellora's* commander observed Arabs ashore loading their ballams with military kit. A landing party in charge of the second and third officers (Mr. Purdy and Mr. Smith) succeeded in capturing three of the marauders and recovering a quantity of military stores and equipment belonging to the 120th and 7th Rajputs. General Sir Arthur Barrett wrote appreciatively of the zeal and pluck displayed by the *Ellora's* officers.

East Africa and Mesopotamia were not the only places where transport ships came under shore-fire.

In September, 1915, Captain A. R. W. Handcock of the *Karoa* had an experience of enemy gun-fire while the ship was lying at anchor at Suvla Bay. The *Karoa* was the only large vessel in the port, and





HADJI. EBRAHIM, THE B. I. COMPANY'S "NO. 1" BASRA RIVER PILOT.



the Turkish gunners fired a few rounds at her at intervals. At each outburst the ship was got under way and cruised about the small harbour, but she could not go outside as an enemy submarine was reported to be in the vicinity and the harbour was enclosed by net defences. "The situation," says Captain Handcock, "may have gratified the Turkish sense of humour, but was not pleasant for anyone on board." All the natives were sent below deck except the carpenter, the Serang on duty on the forecathhead with the chief engineer, and the helmsman, all of whom behaved admirably. The firing was spasmodic throughout the day—seven or eight shells in slow time, then an interval sometimes of as much as three hours. In all thirty rounds were aimed at the ship: several fell just short, ten passed below the wireless aerial and between the masts; only one took effect, striking the ship on the port side, passing through two decks and an iron trunkway into the lower part of the funnel and damaging some ironwork in the saloon alleyway beyond. The damage was relatively small, and the shell caused no casualty. But all hands were glad when falling darkness put an end to the firing. The ship, having completed discharge of stores, put to sea at 11 p.m.

The Shatt-el-Arab, with its treacherous banks and swift currents and sudden bursts of violent weather, demands at any time careful pilotage for its safe navigation by vessels of deep draught. The British India Company's ships make frequent calls at Basra, and their pilotage arrangements are, of course, not left to chance. In the crowded state of the lower river during the war—rendered worse by vessels sunk in the fairway by the Turks—pilotage was more than usually difficult, and the skill of Hadjee Ebrahim, the B. I. Company's No. 1 Pilot, and his fellows, was never more needed.

Two acts of individual bravery necessitated by the vagaries of the river, although not appropriate to the title of this chapter, may perhaps be related here.

On the 17th of November, 1914, the Company's hired transport *Erinpura* was anchored in the Basra River. Alongside, was a barge laden with stores and camp equipment, awaiting towage to the beach. At dusk (5 p.m.) a fierce squall came down from the north-west, raising a heavy sea, and swamping the barge, which sank, throwing a number of sepoy and native boatmen into the stream, when all but three sank im-

mediately. One of the *Erinpura's* life-boats, manned by Europeans, picked up two of the survivors, who were struggling in the water astern of the ship. The third man was seen drifting among the wreckage; but owing to the force of the wind the boat could not reach him. On this the officer in charge beached the boat, and Mr. H. C. Brown, the *Erinpura's* second officer, ran along the bank endeavouring to keep the man in view in the hope that he might drift ashore. As soon as he saw that there was but little chance of this, he took off his clothes and plunged into the stream. He reached the man with difficulty, helped him to hold on to a floating spar, and supported him until, both much exhausted, they were picked up by a boat from the British India steamer *Elephanta*. The rescued man was Private Shaik Hazrat, of the 110th Mahratta Light Infantry.

It was nearly dark when Mr. Brown entered the water, an icy wind was blowing at hurricane force, lashing the water to the condition of a heavy sea, and the ebb-tide was running at five knots. The two men were picked up four miles below the scene of the mishap. For this act the Royal Humane Society's medal was publicly presented to Mr. Brown by Mr. (now Sir Duncan) Carmichael

at the British India Club, Calcutta, on the 24th of May, 1916.

The Society's medal was also awarded to Mr. W. Hutchings, fifth engineer of the *Edavana*, and for an equally gallant though not so successful an attempt. On the 8th of March, 1917, Mr. Hutchings jumped from his ship into the Basra River in an attempt to save from drowning a private of the 7th North Staffordshire Regiment. The peculiarly swift and treacherous state of the stream made the action of considerable hazard; the soldier sank before help could reach him, and his would-be rescuer was picked up, in an exhausted condition, by an Arab ferry boat some distance down the river and fifty minutes after he had entered the water.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SUBMARINE WAR—I. GENERAL SURVEY

By the spring of 1915 the need of providing merchant steamers with means of defence against submarine attack had made itself clearly apparent, although it was not yet realised how great and how widespread that need was to become. The liner companies, their best and fastest ships withdrawn for Government purposes, were still, by means of their secondary steamers, maintaining their accustomed services on a slightly diminished scale but with scarcely impaired regularity. The loss of merchant steamers by submarine attack was of increasing frequency. The torpedoing in May, 1915, of the *Lusitania* with its appalling death-roll shocked the English people into a paroxysm of horror such as was not produced by any other instance of German barbarity throughout the whole course of the war; it will be remembered and pointed to with undiminished disgust when the present generation has passed away. The sinking

of the *Persia* off the island of Crete in December, 1915, with the loss of 335 lives, caused scarcely less indignation. Germany's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare was, even by believers in militant Germany's unlimited power of evil, received with some incredulity. To sink a ship and fire on the survivors in their boats or leave them at the mercy of the elements to starve or drown hundreds of miles from land soon became a common atrocity of the submarine commanders. Later, the misuse of neutral channels of communication for the purpose of delivering up ships of Allies and neutrals alike to be sunk "without trace" was a logical development of the German campaign of ruthless barbarity against merchant seamen.

But the steady development of defensive measures afforded a steadily growing palliation of the hitherto helpless condition of the merchantman. It is not the purpose of these records to refer to these matters except in general terms. But it may be noted that one of the earliest suggestions for defensive armament came from a P. and O. commander, who, as an officer of the Royal Naval Reserve, had, in days long before the war, obtained first-class certificates in torpedo and

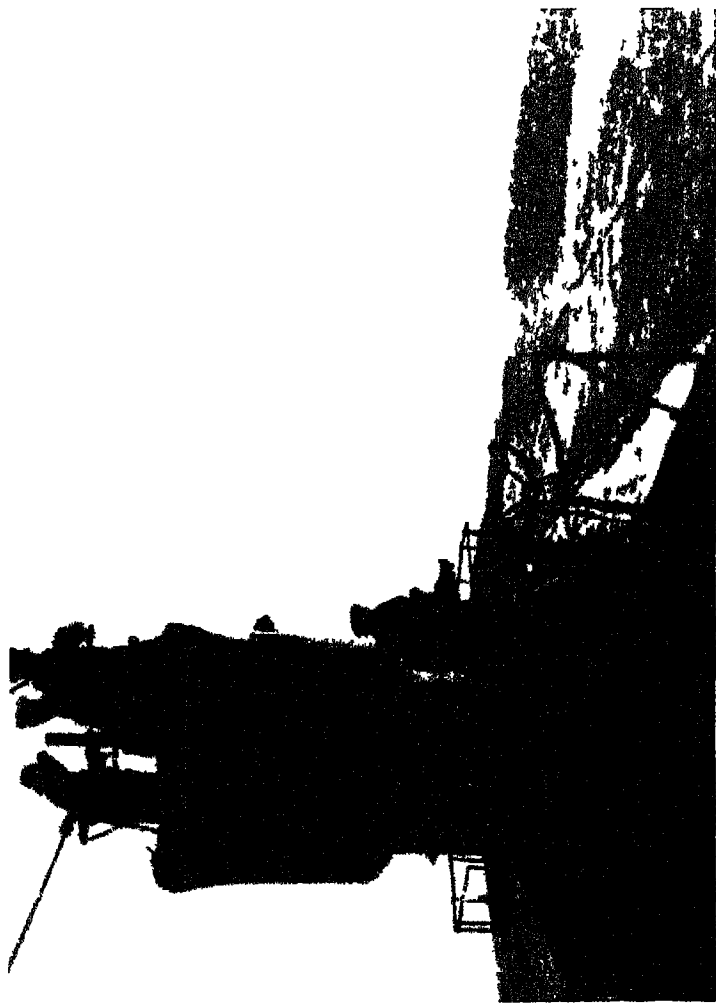


gunnery work in the courses offered to such officers by the Gunnery and Torpedo Schools, H.M.S. *Excellent* and *Vernon*. Acting on the instructions of Lord Inchcape, this officer represented his views and suggestions for the placing of 3-pounders (soon to become inadequate) on the bridges of merchant steamers for defensive purposes, and, to meet the momentary shortage of such guns, he suggested the use of Gibraltar, then considered to be the limit of the danger zone, as a place of transfer of these guns from outward to homeward vessels. These representations received an entirely sympathetic hearing, and the practical results of Admiralty policy in this direction soon became apparent. By May, 1915, such progress had been made that liners between the United Kingdom and Port Said were, with but few exceptions, provided with defensive armament. The work of fitting the guns, so far as Eastern traders were concerned, proceeded simultaneously at home and in Indian ports; guns' crews had to be improvised, and the few men of R.N.R. or R.N.F.R. remaining in merchant steamers were, of course, a most valuable nucleus. The pre-war training of the former, which had been encouraged by Admiralty and owner alike, was, at this time and later, a

source of deep satisfaction. One instance is recorded by a P. and O. commander of the formation of a supplementary gun's crew from among his passengers; they at once applied for the "gun" allowance of sixpence *per diem*!

Yet, even a year later, some people objected that defensively armed vessels were more liable to be torpedoed without warning than those not so armed. The official records show that in the first eight months of 1916, of 78 defensively armed vessels attacked by gun-fire from submarines on the surface, 71 made good their escape; while of 122 unarmed merchantmen similarly attacked, 100 were sunk. The guns were at first invariably mounted aft on or above the poop, and from the position ahead of her intended victim preferably taken up by a submarine submerged (which implies torpedo attack and rules out gun-fire), it was impossible for the latter to observe whether or not the former carried a defensive gun. In the period referred to 12 defensively armed ships and 16 ships not so armed, were torpedoed without warning.

The institution of "sea-gates" at Dover and Folkestone, and the measures taken in connection with this form of defence had, by the summer of



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THE WATCH ON A GERMAN SUBMARINE



1915, certainly minimised the submarine danger, at least in the eastern area of the Channel; but at the Channel's mouth, and on the trade routes in the seas to the south and west, submarine activity increased. Full speed on a widely deviating course was the immediate and partly effective reply. Later the Admiralty system of predetermined, devious, and greatly varying courses, each with a distinguishing number—indicated by wireless to the individual shipmaster at his point of departure—partially nullified the risk to ships approaching or leaving United Kingdom ports. This work was to a large extent entrusted to a Royal Naval Reserve officer of the P. and O. service, whose abilities continued to be at the disposal of the Admiralty until the close of the war. Its success was diminished but not extinguished by the German counter-measure of enlarged submarine patrol.

The system of precise and specific route instructions for the avoidance of submarines or mines was presently applied over a vastly wider area; but, even then, there had always to remain with the commander a measure of discretion, and the exact weight of circumstance necessary to justify the overriding of the official dictum was not easy to determine. On occasions, the shirking of the

responsibility of a personal decision might involve the safety of a considerable number of passengers, and a numerous crew; and instances occurred where warnings from other ships of the neighbourhood of hostile submarines demanded an immediate variation of the officially prescribed course. It is to the credit of Authority that it never failed to demand an explanation, and to the credit of shipmasters that their discretionary action rarely failed to receive official absolution.

The shipmaster in command of a passenger steamer during this time had no enviable task. There was no moment, while his ship was in the danger zone, when he was free from anxiety lest a sudden attack and the dreaded torpedo might place in jeopardy his human freight, which often included a number of women and children. At night, steaming at full speed, without lights, the anxiety was not lessened, for the risk of collision was never absent; and on all the expanse of shrouded sea no vessel, save occasionally a brilliantly lighted hospital ship, gave visual warning of her approach until her hull loomed up through the darkness and, perhaps with a slight change of course, slipped away into the gloom beyond, presently to be followed by another.

Narrow escapes of collision at night were not infrequent; actual collision was of rare occurrence. For commanders approaching Marseilles with a narrow margin of daylight, that the safety beyond the harbour booms was unattainable after sunset must have been an uneasy reflection. Any ship which failed, while this rule remained in force, to make a timely arrival had to put to sea again and steam on an irregular course at full speed until daybreak.

The unremitting work of the mine-sweepers around the British coast needs no eulogy here; quite early it became so effective that the percentage of steamer passages interrupted by contact with mines remained surprisingly low as compared with instances of damage by submarine.

Transmission of wireless signals from steamers was soon found to be a source of risk and, unless for official and indispensable uses, was discontinued by the P. and O. and B. I. Companies' vessels, in common with those of other owners. "Advice" by the Admiralty in the autumn of 1914 under this head was followed by a positive injunction a year later, by which time it had been clearly established that German submarines were able by means of directional apparatus to locate vessels fitted

with wireless telegraphy. Wireless continued, however, to be used for listening purposes, and proved of the greatest value in avoiding danger. In December, 1915, it had become, for the same positional reasons, dangerous for Ushant Wireless Station to receive or report wireless signals of safe passage of passing ships, and its use for this purpose was discontinued.

All the common pre-war measures for the prevention of collision, or stranding in narrow waters, were by the submarine menace converted into dangers greater than those against which they were originally designed. The use of the syren, of ships' navigation lights, of channel and harbour beacons, had all for this reason to be more or less discontinued. The shrouding of interior lights on liners was a matter of constant anxiety to shipmasters; rare instances occurred of treacherous exposure of lamps; or, in the early days of the war at sea, an individual, preferring fresh air to safety, would open a port-hole whose gleam of light at once exposed his vessel to discovery and attack.

Among preventive measures a sharp lookout from all parts of the ship, port, starboard, ahead, astern, and from the crow's-nest was imperatively needed—this, and the quick disposal in the com-



mander's mind of all craft sighted into the categories of harmlessness or suspicion. Captain Haddock of the P. and O. s.s. *Mooltan* records that at noon on the 21st of February, 1916, while crossing the Bay, Lat. 47°10' N., Long. 8°30' W., he sighted a vessel, apparently formerly a merchant vessel, painted now dark grey like a transport—two masts, one funnel, derricks aloft, two on each mast. He at once reflected that with bad weather threatening, her derricks (exhibited as an assertion of peaceful character) should have been stowed on deck, and that three gangway doors in her side, from the waist forward, probably concealed a hostile armament. Both ships were steering S.W. No doubt could remain when the stranger ported, as if to cut the *Mooltan* off. The *Mooltan's* helm was put hard a-port and her gun brought to bear. When the stranger found he was being outdistanced he hoisted the red ensign and stood off on a course W.N.W. All the indications pointed to an enemy raider.

On the 16th of October, 1917, when the *Caledonia*, zigzagging in convoy, was on passage between Orcte and the African coast, voyaging from London to Bombay, Quartermaster Allen on watch in the crow's-nest reported a submarine ahead;

the submarine was seen to dive, doubtless preparatory to action, having taken the line of the convoy's approach. The escort, warned by the *Caledonia*, had instantly altered the convoy's course away at full speed; and the submarine commander must have found himself very considerably out in his reckoning.

The ceaseless instruction of passengers, voyage after voyage, in emergency boat-drill was now more than ever necessary, and to the thoroughness of this was due in many instances the complete immunity of a torpedoed ship's company from loss of life, except such as might occur from the explosion.

Those who were not on the sea in these dangerous times have perhaps but little idea of the minute care taken in this respect. As an example, the following extract from a commander's report may be instructive:

"Passengers and crew had, on the previous day, been once more exercised for thirty minutes at boat stations, the following drill being carried out: Passengers and crew at their allotted boats and stations—(a) on both sides of the ship; (b) if the boats on the port side only could be lowered; (c) if the boats on the starboard side only could be lowered. Several boats were swung out

by their proper crews and lowered to the promenade deck rail in the position to receive women, children, and inactive persons; passengers were instructed how to swing out to, and slide down, the boat falls; the side ladders were pointed out to any too nervous to carry out the quicker method. Passengers were requested to inspect the boats when at the rail, and to listen to a short lecture delivered by the chief officer describing the arrangements for transferring to the boats, getting away from the ship's side, the position to be taken up by the boats when they had pushed off, the duties of the officers of the boats, and the officers of sections; the position of the boat's plug (held up for inspection), axes, compass, oil, matches; how and when to use the Verey lights; why the painter was on the inside bow and the importance of not casting it off until ordered to do so; the use of the sea anchor; the daily scale of provisions; sanitary arrangements."

Besides all this, rafts fitted with axes, water breakers, flare-lights, etc., are by Board of Trade rules placed on the topmost deck of British ships. These are not secured in any way, so that in case of submergence of the ship they may float off and give anyone struggling in the water a chance of survival.

To insure the safety of the engine-room staff of a torpedoed and sinking steamship was a matter which demanded and received careful pre-arrange-

ment, but which was not always easy of accomplishment. The record of the P. and O. and British India Companies, equally with those of other lines, shows that the behaviour of engine-room personnel, engineer officers and men alike, was distinguished by a stoical heroism. To stop, or reverse and stop, engines and thus get the way off a ship in order that boats might be safely lowered, was usually the least required of engineers before ordering them to seek safety. In a vessel already crippled by torpedo attack and waterlogged, but slowly making for a harbour of refuge, there was always danger that a second torpedo might bring the ship and those within her to swift destruction. It is not too much to say that in such circumstances engineers and their men carried on in the face of death.

The provision of a specially trained "officer instructor," R.N.R., for defensively armed ships in waters usually frequented by submarines was undertaken by the Admiralty in January, 1917, when the submarine war was threatening to enter upon a more acute phase. The duty of this officer was to assist the master in training his look-outs, gun's crew, smoke apparatus party, etc., and generally to impart to the master, officers, and crew

instructions and advice based on experience gained in the war as to the best methods of avoiding and repelling submarine attack, together with the precautions considered necessary for the purpose.

As the armament of the enemy submarine increased in power, heavier guns were mounted by merchant steamers for protective purposes; in July, 1917, the commander of a steamer undergoing repair is warned that before he leaves port the Admiralty will mount a 6-inch gun on his vessel. One well-placed shot from such a gun was considered sufficient to sink any submarine afloat.

In August, 1917, instructional courses in gunnery for cadets and apprentices of the mercantile marine were instituted at the Royal Naval Barracks, Chatham. The duration of the course was ten working days; students lived on a battleship, slept in hammocks, and had a special mess all at Admiralty expense. Free railway passes from the student's home or ship were provided, and an allowance of £1 to cover incidental expenses. Passed students received sixpence a day, extra Admiralty pay, while serving as gun's crews in defensively armed merchant steamers, and, after fifteen months' interval, were required to undergo

a re-qualifying course. The apprentices of the New Zealand Shipping Company's steamer *Otaki* showed the value of junior ratings, for, as told elsewhere, two of them helped to man the *Otaki's* single gun against the heavily armed raider *Moewe*, and died in the fight.

In September, 1917, it was laid down that standard ships of from 3,500 to 7,000 tons, having a crew complement of thirty or over, should be strengthened to receive a defensive armament of two 4·7-inch guns; those of 7,000 tons and upwards two 6-inch guns; and it was recommended that the same basis of strengthening should be adopted in the case of vessels being built for private firms. In November of the same year the existing defensive armament was, in certain cases, supplemented by the mounting of two 7·5-inch howitzers or bomb-throwers for the projection of 40-foot depth charges against submerged submarines, and several P. and O. and British India vessels were so armed. Depth charges, which may be said to have been compounded of applied chemistry, synthetic earthquake, and sudden death to the submarine, were as nearly as possible the final solution of a naval problem which had endured throughout the greater part of the war.



A DEPTH CHARGE EXPLODING

U.S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPH





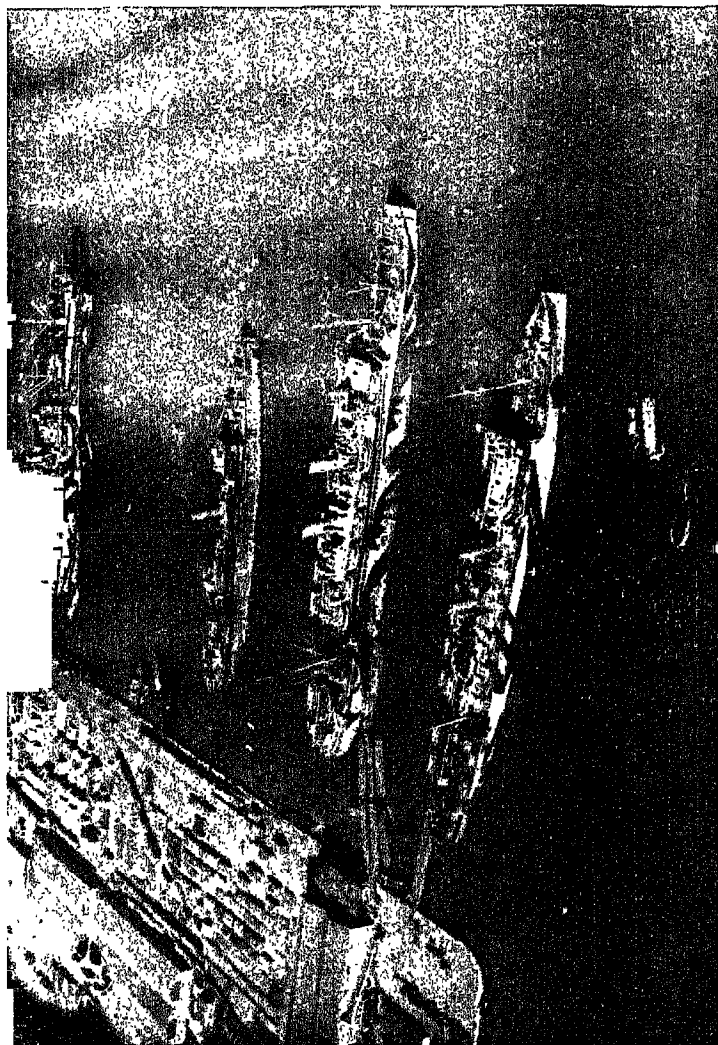
In December, 1917, notice was given of a short elementary course of instruction for engineers in gun repair, with special reference, when possible, to the type of gun mounted in the ship to which they belonged, for cases had arisen of the guns of defensively armed ships being put out of action through minor defects quite capable of repair at sea by the ship's engineers.

Occasionally, the use of depth charges had unexpected effects. At 8.20 a.m. on the 22nd of January, 1918, when the P. and O. s.s. *Nellore* was steaming in convoy, the T.B.D. escort signalled "submarine sighted on starboard side." Signal was made by the guide to alter course eight points to port, but immediately afterwards the concussion of a violent explosion was felt on board the *Nellore*, followed almost instantly by another explosion; engines were stopped, and a signal given to leave the engine-room. Reports by the carpenter on sounding the wells, and from the engine-room, were reassuring, whereupon the commander signalled "no damage," and rang on the engines full speed. The concussion had been caused by depth charges dropped by the destroyer escort close to the ship in the wake of a torpedo which had passed 100 yards astern. Although all

on board were momentarily convinced that the ship had been twice torpedoed, perfect discipline prevailed and all orders were immediately obeyed.

By February, 1918, the system of ship camouflage known as "dazzle-painting" had been fully appraised, and an official decision taken to apply this protection to all British vessels. The breaking up of the visual form of steamers by means of colours and by light and shade effects, sharply contrasted, was sufficient to render ships alongside a wharf difficult to be seen by aircraft; at sea it greatly reduced visibility, and at certain angles rendered the line of the ship's course difficult to be determined; it was not so effective at night, when the form of a ship's hull was not by its use greatly obscured. Nearly all P. and O. and British India steamers whose voyages brought them west of Suez received the adornment of Mr. Spencer Wilkinson's protective designs, which greatly contributed to their safe passage of the infested seas.

The frequent change of a ship's direction in especially dangerous waters, known to mariners as "zigzagging," was instituted by adoption from the Navy as early as the winter of 1914. This was found to be very effective, and was rendered more so by special courses of instruction in the method



CAMOUFLAGED STEAMERS AT SALONICA.

In the foreground, *Kaiser-i-Hind* (P. and O.); beyond *Orionide*, (Orient Line)



which were given to mercantile marine commanders. There were certain parts of this course which were delightfully practical. Although it was the outcome of a series of marine tragedies, the spectacle of, on the one hand, a blindfolded shipmaster propelling a two-wheeled barrow, representing a submerged submarine, and another shipmaster, eyes free, also with a barrow, pursuing a zigzag but cumulatively parallel course, was not without its humorous side. An occasional uncovering of the eyes of the blindfolded officer reproduced for purposes of experimental instruction the emergence of the submarine's periscope, and was, if necessary, followed by a change of course. This homely method gave a complete demonstration of the value of zigzagging, for frequently the "submarine" uncovered only to find himself hopelessly out of range for attack upon his intended victim. So it was at sea. Zigzagging was presently reduced to a more or less exact science, and was practised by individual ships and by ships in convoy up to the close of the war.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SUBMARINE WAR—II. P. AND O. COMPANY

To detail exhaustively the escapes and sinkings of vessels of the allied fleets would overburden these records; a chronological statement will be found in the Appendix. In the references to P. and O. ships the informed reader will observe some notable omissions. The stories of the destruction of the *Persia* and *Maloja* were fully narrated in the contemporary press; the *India*, *Moldavia*, and *Marmora* were lost while they were in the service of the Admiralty, and manned by naval crews. Many encounters are without outstanding incident, or to recite them would involve repetition of incident; but enough is here set down to illustrate the risks faced by the mercantile seaman during the war, as a part of his service to the commonwealth of these islands, to the allied nations, and to the Empire.

The story of the *Nellore* presents perhaps the most extraordinary series of escapes of the whole

series. She sustained no less than nine separate encounters with the enemy's under-water craft, and on each occasion not only escaped, but escaped without injury. Three times she was attacked by gun-fire; three times her own gun saved her; three times she was chased—on two occasions she escaped by reason of her speed; in three cases naval craft steamed to her rescue; once, when in convoy, the submarine was driven off by the escort; twice the enemy, having missed with his torpedo, failed to follow up the attack.

Her baptism occurred on the 29th of September, 1916. At three minutes past eleven in the morning, when she was on her way from Gibraltar to Marseilles, about fifty miles east of Cartagena, an enemy submarine was seen, distant about three miles, three degrees on the starboard bow, attacking a small steamer. The submarine commander transferred his gun-fire to the larger game and gave chase. Starboarding helm, putting on extra speed, and ordering his gun's crew to stand by, Captain A. M. King of the *Nellore* opened fire in reply. A short exchange of shots was sufficient. The *Nellore* escaped. Proceeding on another route to Marseilles, she safely reached that port two days later.

Eight months elapsed during which she received no unwelcome attention, but on the morning of the 1st of May, 1917, when bound from Port Said towards Marseilles, midway between Sicily and the coast of Tripoli, she was again chased, this time by a submarine six miles away. Full speed was ordered, and the *Nellore* got away without an engagement. But the day was not done. At 4 p.m., when the ship had run sixty miles, an empty life-boat was observed marked "Marseilles, No. 8." On the probability of its purpose as a decoy, the commander ordered its destruction by non-explosive shot: the first round passed through the stern of the boat, in which, as expected, a bomb had been placed, for with the impact the bomb burst, completing the boat's destruction. The practice of drifters or patrol vessels of ramming derelict boats was soon afterwards discontinued by Admiralty order; instead, gun-fire was resorted to; and the *Nellore's* experience proved to be by no means uncommon.

On the same voyage, between Marseilles and Gibraltar on the 15th of May, at 5.15 p.m. the vessel encountered two enemy submarines, which chased her for three-quarters of an hour. The commander manœuvred to keep his ship between



the enemy and the setting sun. During the chase the submarines fired from their four guns between forty and fifty rounds without making a hit; but there is reason to believe that the *Nellore* scored with the last of her sixteen shots, for, while one submarine dived, the other was apparently unable to do so, and ran away on the surface. The second officer, Mr. R. A. Jones, was awarded the Yarrow grant of £20 for sighting the enemy.

On the 23rd of the same month, at the mouth of the Channel, she was attacked at close range, the submerged enemy's torpedo missing her stern by a few feet. The attack was not followed up by gun-fire, for, apart from risk from the *Nellore's* gun, the enemy had in these waters become chary of exposing himself to the ever increasing naval devices especially designed for his destruction.

For "continued good service" in evading these attacks, Captain King was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. His ship's arrival in London on the 25th of May completed what was probably one of the liveliest voyages of the war.

On the 1st of July, at 5.20 a.m., eighty miles S.W. of the Scilly Isles, outward bound under escort from Plymouth to Gibraltar, the *Nellore's*

watch observed a submarine periscope astern, on which she opened fire. The submarine immediately dived. The escort placed herself between the liner and the enemy position, and the convoy proceeded.

The ship cleared from Gibraltar, and then from Marscilles, steaming, still under escort, in the direction of Malta. On the 13th of July, at 9.46 a.m. keen eyes on the bridge observed suspicious indications on the port beam. The ship was manœuvred to lessen her exposure, and the expected torpedo missed her stern by twenty-five yards; it also missed 100 tons of gunpowder stowed in No. 5 hold. At a round, smooth patch, which indicated the beginning of the torpedo's wake, the *Nellore* fired one shot, the escort reached the position and dropped depth charges; no further trace of the enemy was seen, and the ship continued her voyage. "The passengers and crew," Captain King, not for the first time, reports, "all behaved splendidly."

So much for 1917. The attack of the 22nd of January following has been referred to. On the 11th of March, at 4.8 a.m., during the chief officer's watch, when the ship was steaming west of Gibraltar, in complete darkness, without lights,

and zigzagging, star-shells began to burst overhead, followed by projectiles fired from a position apparently one mile distant on the starboard beam. That position was promptly brought astern, the S.O.S. sent out, and the ship navigated away at full speed; and although the gun's crew were sent to stations, they were ordered not to expose the steamer's position by firing unless the submarine became visible. Passengers, aroused at this unusually early hour, donned clothes and life-belts and were assembled in the saloon, where coffee and refreshments were served. Star-shells continued to light up the ship, which, however, rapidly increased her distance; no reply was made to the enemy, and at 4.25 a.m. the shelling ceased. Erratic courses were then steered, and at day-break no indications of the submarine could be seen. Again, this time under Captain G. E. Butler, the *Nellore* had eluded the enemy!

On the 11th of July, 1918, occurred the last recorded attack. At 5.35 a.m. the *Nore*, a sister ship, took in the *Nellore*'s S.O.S. from a position distant 231 miles, with a report that she was being "gunned." From the *Nore*'s escort a destroyer was detached for the *Nellore*'s assistance. Some hours later the wireless operator on

board the *Nore* received the *Nellore's* customary signal—"Escaped."

The encounter of the *Mooltan* with a suspicious "merchant" steamer has been already alluded to. A somewhat similar experience befel the *Mongolia* (Captain H. G. Lewellin) in the early days of the war; it exemplifies the part which individual qualities of character and mind in the merchant commander played in the rejection of danger and the wise choice of the line of least resistance. The armed merchant skipper's job was to run away if he could; if he couldn't he had to fight. On the 17th of May, 1915, at 7 p.m. Cape Torinana bearing east seventeen miles, a high sea running, with haze over the land, the *Mongolia*, outward bound from London to Australia, sighted what was believed to be an enemy submarine on her port quarter, distant one mile. The chief officer caught sight of the object three times before it appeared to dive. The *Mongolia's* speed was increased to the maximum and the ship put on a zigzag course, without, however, bringing the submarine astern in a position for defensive attack. The commander's reason for this was that to have brought the *Mongolia* to such a position would have placed her closer to a vessel which was manœuvring sus-

piciously on the starboard bow. This vessel, of an indefinite appearance as to character and nationality, was heading to the west with very little way on; at 7.5 p.m. she came round on the port helm and headed for the *Mongolia*; at 7.15 she was abeam, steering south at an apparent speed of ten knots on a course parallel to that of the mail steamer, which was now running at seventeen and a half knots. At 7.30 p.m., with darkness approaching, she was not in sight. There seems to be ground for suspecting an unfulfilled collaboration between two enemy craft. The *Mongolia* was to fall victim to an enemy raider, but not yet.

Captain Asbury (P. and O. s.s. *Nore*) records that on the 7th of November, 1915, at 1.28 p.m., when 120 miles west of the Island of Crete, he sighted the periscope of a submarine some four feet above water, from five to six hundred yards on his starboard beam. The weather was fine and clear, with a gentle west wind and a fairly smooth sea. The submarine then completely submerged, but followed the *Nore*, coming near to the surface about every eighteen minutes. The disturbance of the water as her periscope emerged was clearly visible, and sea birds hovering over her broken water were also a useful guide as to her whereabouts.

This continued for three hours, the distance of the enemy from the *Nore* varying from three-quarters of a mile to two miles. The *Nore* worked up speed, wireless calls were sent out and answered, and everything on board made ready. Passengers had had frequent emergency drills. They and the ship's crew "went quietly to stations." After 4.30 p.m. the submarine was not seen again. The *Nore's* gun was not brought into action, as the submarine never gave her a target. A year later the escape of the ship, in such circumstances, from some form of attack would have been inexplicable. Possibly this submarine carried no guns or was without ammunition; possibly her commander spent some of his time in wondering what sort of gun and gunners the *Nore* carried. Hitting back by the merchant steamer was a somewhat new game, and the enemy submariner, as yet, was inclined to be wary.

Two days later, on the 9th of November, in the same waters, the watch on board the *Kashgar* (Captain H. N. Rivers), outward bound to the east, discerned the periscope of a submarine following the ship on her port quarter. This was at 1.55 p.m. Two minutes later Captain Rivers opened fire at 1,000 yards range, causing the enemy

craft to submerge; the submarine then reappeared on the starboard quarter at 1,500 yards distance, but, after a second shot from the *Kashgar's* gun, disappeared and gave up the chase. It does not appear that the *Kashgar* made a hit, but her gun undoubtedly saved her.

The sea-wandering impulse is bred in the blood and bones of the Briton as an element of racial character; to go about his business or pleasure overseas is as natural to him as flight to a bird. The submarine menace did not stop the men; it did not stop the women; when they could, they went, on sea or land, where their men went, danger or no danger. All honour to them. But the presence of women and children in attacked ships constituted an embarrassment in fighting the submarine, and permits for their voyaging came presently to be most sparingly granted. Those men or women who went to sea as passengers went knowing the risk they ran, and whenever the test came they faced it helpfully and with quiet courage.

An early instance was the attack on the *Malta* on Friday the 28th of January. At 12.50 p.m., as her passengers were going below to prepare for lunch, those on board were startled by the

splash of a shell which had fallen close to the ship; shots then came in quick succession, always nearer the vessel, which soon had the attacking submarine right astern, and her 4.7-inch gun in action. Wireless signals were sent out, passengers and crew took their stations at the allotted boats quietly and quickly, and stood under fire, awaiting orders, throughout the attack. Then torpedo boat destroyers, summoned by wireless, came at thirty knots of speed racing towards the ship.

As the first destroyer dropped astern to engage the submarine, the firing ceased, and the enemy disappeared, whether by voluntary submersion or a well placed shell from the *Malta* is not certain. At 2 p.m. the commander piped down boat stations, and passengers dispersed to the welcome sound of the luncheon gong.

A month later, on the 29th of February, at the time of sunset, the *Nyanza* was off the north coast of Africa, homeward bound from Calcutta, Cape de Garde bearing south seventeen miles. At 5.20 p.m. the watch reported a suspicious-looking vessel, which the commander recognised as a submarine disguised as a sailing craft. He at once altered his course, bringing the enemy on to the port quarter, sent out his position by wireless,



and opened fire at long range. At the sixth shot the submarine, which was rapidly gaining on the ship, emitted a large volume of light-coloured smoke, and shortly afterwards disappeared. At 6.20 p.m. two French torpedo boats passed close alongside, "morsed" for the ship's name, were duly answered, and proceeded at full speed to the submarine's last observed position. But there seems good reason to believe that she had already been hit and sunk by the *Nyanza*. The commander sent out a wireless message, "Escaped," zigzagged until 7 p.m., and then stood on his course.

The *Kaisar-i-Hind* was named in honour of the visit of the King and Queen to India for the Delhi Durbar of 1911, about which time her construction was commenced. A passenger steamer of 11,400 tons and a speed of eighteen and a half knots, she was several times attacked by enemy submarines, but managed on every occasion to reject their addresses.

The first attack occurred on the 23rd of March, 1916, when Captain C. D. Bennett, R.N.R., was in command, midway between Crete and Malta. At 7.20 a.m. a submarine, submerged on the starboard beam, aimed a torpedo at the ship which passed a hundred feet astern. Captain Bennett

sent out a wireless code message of warning to all ships, but two hours later (9.15 a.m.) picked up a wireless message from the *Minneapolis* saying that she had been torpedoed near the same position (probably by the same submarine), but that all her company had got away safely in the boats. At 10.30 the *Kaisar-i-Hind* passed a destroyer going to the assistance of the *Minneapolis*.

The second attack occurred fifteen months later, when the ship was about 100 miles west of Casa Blanca bound from Bombay to London. At 8 a.m. on the 17th of June, 1917, as she was steaming at seventeen and a half knots and zig-zagging, an approaching torpedo was observed. She was quickly manœuvred and the torpedo passed twelve feet astern. The submarine was not seen, but from the direction of the torpedo the commander (Captain W. B. Palmer) judged her original position to have been abaft his ship's beam. Two days later she evaded a suspicious-looking craft which her commander classed as an enemy raider. A month later, on the 17th of July, at twenty minutes past five in the morning, when 120 miles south-west of the Scilly Isles, the ship survived a third attack. Outward bound to Bombay, she was zigzagging at eighteen knots

when a torpedo was seen travelling towards her from a position on the port beam. The ship was manœuvred, and the torpedo cleared the rudder by only six feet. These diminishing margins of safety, first a hundred feet, then twelve, then six, may have seemed ominous; fortunately this was the last actual attack, although she had one more encounter.

Approaching Falmouth on a zigzag course on the 13th of October, the periscope of a submarine was seen about 500 yards distant on the port beam. The ship was heading S.60.W., the submarine approximately N.45.E. The latter was apparently not in a favourable position for attack, and as the *Kaisar-i-Hind's* speed quickly opened the operative radius of her guns, the submarine made haste to disappear.

The *Arabia*, a favourite ship, well known in the Indian passenger service, after escaping twice, was brought to an untimely end. At 7.30 p.m. on the 9th of May, 1915, in the English Channel, occurred her first encounter. At half-past seven in the evening the watch sighted a submarine a little abaft the starboard beam, one mile distant, flying a flag which appeared to have a cross on it, and heading towards the ship. The *Arabia's*

commander, Captain W. B. Palmer, hoisted the British flag and manœuvred to bring the submarine astern and the *Arabia's* gun to bear, thus introducing an element of safety, for each vessel became obscured from the other by the smoke of the liner, which steamed away at full speed in the falling twilight and so made her escape. The smoke screen as an item of defensive tactics was yet to be developed.

Two months later, on the 3rd of July, the *Arabia*, homeward bound from Bombay, at the Channel's mouth again sighted a submarine, distant about one and a half miles on the port beam. The *Arabia* hoisted her colours and manœuvred. The submarine declined the engagement, for by the time the *Arabia's* gun had been brought to bear the enemy was not in sight. Five hours afterwards a second submarine was observed, rising on the starboard quarter, about one and a half miles distant. This time the enemy submerged, periscope awash, evidently intending to close in for torpedo attack. But the *Arabia*, at seventeen and a half knots, made haste to place herself out of danger, and hoisting warning signals to all passing vessels, continued her homeward voyage.

Nearly sixteen months' continuous voyaging between London and the East passed without recorded incident. Then, 100 miles S. by W. of Cape Matapan, the south-west corner of Greece, the end came, and the *Arabia*, by the ship-loving eyes of men, was to be seen no more. Her requiem was sounded to all the world by wireless from Berlin:

"On the 6th of November [1916] a German submarine sank by torpedo a hostile transport ship of about 12,000 tons eighty sea miles west of Malta."

The only ship torpedoed in the Mediterranean on the date named was the *Arabia*. She was not a transport, nor was she, except defensively, engaged in hostilities. Thus with the war in its third year Germany continued to court neutral opinion.

The *Arabia* was homeward bound from Sydney, carrying mails from Australia, China, and India, and a company—passengers, crew, and officers—of 720 souls. She was torpedoed without warning, and sank in an hour and twenty minutes. The torpedo was first seen a short distance from the starboard side, when, although the helm was at once put hard a-port, it was impossible to avoid it. It struck the vessel abreast the engine-room,

killing eleven of the native crew, doing considerable damage to the engines, extinguishing the electric light, and, among other extensive injury, blowing to pieces one of the life-boats, whose flying wreckage put the wireless aerials out of action. Fortunately there were other ships in sight, and from these wireless calls were sent out and answered. Meantime, the *Arabia* got to work with her gun, and the submarine was driven under water. It then reappeared a short distance away and fired a second torpedo, which missed. But the first had been sufficient to ensure the vessel's destruction.

Among her 437 passengers the *Arabia* carried 169 women and children. When the order to abandon ship was given these were, of course, the first to be placed in safety; there was no sign of panic, and thanks to the brave and steady behaviour of the lascar crew under their British officers, the boats were away with all passengers and surviving crew within fifteen minutes of the explosion. The officers entered the last boat and stood off awaiting the captain. Having destroyed the secret papers and documents and satisfied himself that nobody remained on board, he signalled the boat to come alongside, and then left the ship. Meantime, four armed trawlers and

the Ellerman liner *City of Marseilles* had arrived upon the scene, and were shortly followed by a French man-of-war.

What, in a happening of this sort, were the impressions of the individual passenger? Read what a mother writes long after the event:

“At 10.45 a.m., my woman help not being handy, I went down into my cabin to fetch ‘eleven o’clock’ milk for my two children, and, having settled myself into a deck-chair, was pouring it out when there was a sickening shock, a dull thud and vibration, and a loud report. I exclaimed to a friend near, ‘They have got us!’ and we instantly began to put on the children’s life-belts. My hands were shaking, but, although I had no idea one’s brain could work so fast, the first strings of the child’s belt were tied before the syren blew. There were spare life-belts in a locker near. I got one, fixed it on, and then we went straight to our particular boat—I with one child, the attendant with the other, and my friend carrying a rug and bottle of milk. Alas! when we reached our boat station, we saw that our boat was hopelessly damaged. We went on to the next, which was already nearly full. This was below the level of the deck, so, balancing myself on the ship’s rail, with the eldest child in my arms (it seems like sleep-walking now), I dropped, and my friend followed. Then I turned to catch the other child, but the boat was being lowered all the time, and neither my child nor the attendant was

visible. I tried to get back, but it was impossible. I called up to two men on deck to try to find the child, holding up the other one, as both were dressed alike. But no, our boat reached the water and we pulled away, leaving my baby in the doomed ship.

"The calm sea was dotted with the ship's boats. Oddly enough, even in the midst of my distraction, the idea struck me that the scene was like the Serpentine on a sunny Sunday afternoon. Presently a young steward, a white man, said the boat was leaking. We were so crammed up that only by pressing close together could we make room for anyone to bale. At last another ship's boat came alongside and took off some lascars from ours, which lightened us considerably.

"Then the smoke of mine-sweepers on the horizon brought hope, and they came up; also the *City of Marseilles*, outward bound. Our boatload was taken on board a mine-sweeper, which usually carried a crew of sixteen. With the other survivors she was now carrying 240. The *City of Marseilles* had picked up other boats, and I prayed that my baby might be in one of them! One woman who had dropped her false teeth overboard from the boat exclaimed in a wail they had cost £25, and she had only worn them twice because they were so uncomfortable!

"The *Arabia* looked unspeakably dignified as she reared up and then plunged beneath the waves. I cannot describe my admiration for the crew of the mine-sweeper—no more courteous gentlemen have I ever met. And the discipline



and self-control of every white man and woman—save one, and he was not a 'white man'—was marvellous.

"During our time in the ship's boat I told my little girl stories, that she might not realise what was happening. Soon after we had been picked up the calm warm day turned to storm and rain, and everyone was sea-sick, and cold and miserable. My friend and I and the little girl were in the fore part of the mine-sweeper, where we lay on the deck in rows packed as tightly as sardines. The sea became stormy and waves poured over us. My little girl was semi-conscious from about 2 p.m. on the day we were torpedoed, Monday, until midday on Tuesday. That miserable night, while the storm raged with thunder and lightning, is indescribable. In the morning a sailor helped us to climb over the recumbent forms to the stern, where we were drier, and a little sun came out to warm us.

"At tea-time on Tuesday, a young Australian brought my little girl a small piece of bread and butter. Before this the sailors had passed round their own lunch, but there were too many to divide it among, and none came our way. Another dusk, another night, still buoyed up by hope of reaching Malta 'before sunset,' 'before midnight,' until at last, at 2 a.m. on Wednesday, we saw the lights of the harbour. In a short time we found ourselves on board a hospital ship, where we were given soup and bread. A piece of bread being handed to the child by a young doctor (oh, so boyish and shy and clean!), she, only two and a half, exclaimed

in surprised tones: 'What, no butter!' Even at that hour he went off and found some for her!

"Next day, after inspection, we were allowed to leave the ship, and were billeted in various hotels. I was black and blue from being walked over on the deck of the mine-sweeper. By the kindness of the P. and O. Company everyone was allowed to draw money to spend on clothes.

"All this time no news of my baby. Next day we heard that a collier was expected, bringing survivors, 'believed to be only men.' At last they began to arrive, among them my attendant, and, borne in the arms of a young sailor, the child."

The torpedoing of the *Arabia* marked a definite stage in the submarine war. The resulting open exchange of notes between the Governments of the United States and Germany had an appreciable effect in advancing the slowly growing perception of the States as to the true character of German aims and of Germany's intention to attain those aims by whatever means her lawless hands could lay hold of, without regard to the dictates of humanity or the conventions of international usage in war. The event was regarded by the press of Great Britain as a sign of Germany's conviction that the war, failing destruction of British maritime communications, was already lost; and her reversion three months later to submarine piracy

in an intensified and wholly unrestrained degree was the practical outcome of plans already laid, of which the destruction of the *Arabia* was a sure precursor.

At one period of the war the channels of the East Coast received every twenty-four hours a fresh crop of enemy mines, which were as regularly garnered by the British mine-sweepers; then an occasional interruption of this routine and the closing of the channel to shipping left the returning submarines to be "hoist with their own petard," and the damage to our coastwise shipping was for a spell somewhat lessened.

Among its vessels the P. and O. Company employed two small steamers in the East Coast trade for the transhipment of cargo to or from their liners berthed in London. One of these, the *Harlington* (Captain W. B. Potts), on a winter night (9th of December) in 1916, struck a mine, some miles off the coast, in the neighbourhood of Harwich. A ship of a 1,000 tons gross measurement takes no long time to fill when her bottom has been blown away by a violent explosion. The little *Harlington* was no exception. In three minutes she had disappeared. Notwithstanding rough weather the entire crew got away in their

boats, and shortly afterwards were picked up by the collier *Hartyn*. Some of the *Harlington's* crew had been drenched and chilled by immersion in the wintry sea. The *Hartyn* offered them relative comfort and the means of drying their clothing. Their sense of comfort was shortlived. As these men stood in borrowed kit in the grateful warmth of her boiler-room, a submarine mine claimed the *Hartyn* herself for a victim. She sank quickly; two of her crew perished, and with them seven of the men but lately rescued. A third coasting vessel came to the assistance of the survivors and landed them at Sheerness.

The same month the *Caledonia*, most powerful and fastest of the P. and O. Company's fleet of trunk-line passenger steamers, when off the coast of Crete, homeward bound with the Indian mail, fell in with a British destroyer, and was by her escorted to Malta; thence she came towards Marseilles under the protection of H.M.S. *Rifleman*. All went well until early on the 12th of December, when, rounding the north coast of Corsica, a heavy south-westerly gale began to blow, and the escort with her convoy ran for shelter to Toulon. At 8 a.m. on the 14th the ships left Toulon, the *Caledonia* steering a course for the swept channel,

which had been indicated by precise directions from the local port authorities. But no channel is long safe from the submarine minelayer, and twenty minutes after changing course by direction of the local examination vessel, the *Caledonia* ran upon a two-tier mine, whose double detonation holed her right through, low down, sixty feet abaft the forefoot. The ship was stopped, and in fifteen minutes the boats were away with all passengers and the crew, the commander retaining on board the chief officer, a small crew of lascars, and two quartermasters. Many craft were about, and passengers and crew were soon picked up.

Sounding of the wells showed thirty feet of water in the forehold, and ten feet in the next compartment; the engines were intact with steam on. The shock to the ship had been of a violent and terrifying character; the extent of the damage could not then be ascertained, but it was known to be considerable, and the length of time during which she would keep afloat was altogether problematical, depending on the holding of a badly shaken bulkhead. Two engineers returned to the ship, and, with four lascars working in the stokehold, the commander, Captain A. L. Valentini, decided to attempt to get her into Marseilles under

her own steam. At 3 p.m. he had the satisfaction of seeing her berthed at that port, where in the meantime his passengers and crew had been landed in safety.

The sailmaker, Woodley, fell from his boat into the sea and was not seen again; no other life was lost. The ship carried, besides her mails, a valuable freight; her escape was a narrow one, and the commander deserved the congratulations he received from the P. and O. chairman and directors on his handling of the situation.

On the 1st of February, 1917, Germany, desperate, embarked upon her unrestricted U-boat campaign; two days later as a consequence occurred her final rupture with the United States of America. On the 6th of April America declared war upon her, and whatever might, in other circumstances, have resulted, from that moment Germany's fate in this war was indelibly written.

From this time onwards, losses of British and neutral shipping came thick and fast, and in the course of the year 1917 no fewer than forty-four steamers of the P. and O. and allied fleets were sent to the bottom.

One of the first of the P. and O. ships to be attacked in 1917 was the *Berrima*, 11,100 tons,

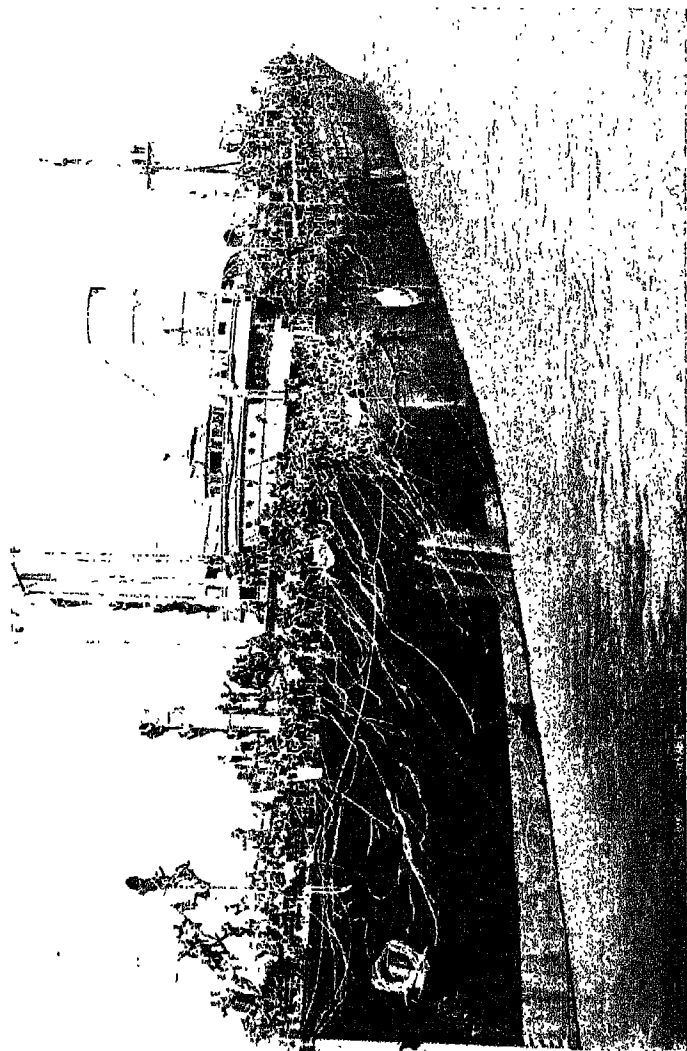
belonging to the P. and O. Branch Line. On the afternoon of Sunday, the 18th of February, she cleared Plymouth breakwater trimmed to an even keel, drawing 23' 3" fore and aft, and under orders to proceed to London. At 8 p.m., in intense darkness, when fifty miles west of Portland Bill, she was struck by a torpedo or mine on the port side of No. 4 hold just abaft the engine-room. Confidential papers were at once thrown overboard in a weighted bag, the engines stopped, the S.O.S. sent out, and the crew ordered away in the ship's boats. The commander retained on board the chief officer, second engineer, five seamen, and the baker. Inspection showed that the damage, though serious, was well localised. An hour after the explosion the destroyer *Forester* came in sight and picked up the people in the boats. The ship was then listing ten degrees, sinking by the stern and straining badly; by 10 p.m. the water in the engine-room had risen to twenty feet, in No. 4 hold it was level with the sea; the ship's stern was immersed to a depth of thirty-five feet, and it appeared that she might founder at any moment. In these circumstances, Captain Lingham, his officers and men, were ordered to come on board the destroyer. The roll-call showed that of the

*Berrima's* men Bos'n H. Girt, Senior Gunner A. Crompton, Fireman F. McCarthy, and Assistant Troop Cook A. Brown had lost their lives.

In the early morning, while it was still dark, the tug *Pilot* arrived, and the commander, chief and second officers, fourth engineer, the Channel pilot, and eight seamen returned to the disabled ship; a hawser was then passed to the tug, which began to tow her in the direction of Portland. All through the day the commander and his band of volunteers boarded the ship at intervals and found her condition becoming worse from hour to hour. By direction of the port commodore the King's harbour-master from Portland presently came and boarded the tug. At a quarter past six the *Berrima*, drawing forty-two feet aft, with her keel dragging the ground, came to the anchorage in Portland Harbour; forty-five minutes later the salvage pumps were at work. In due time the ship went to sea again.

As is well known, there were in the course of the war comparatively few disasters to troop-ships. Apart from the relatively minor danger of mines east of Suez, contingents brought over from New Zealand or Australia made the voyage to Egypt in safety. Once through the Suez





H.M.T. "BORDA" (P. AND O. BRANCH LINE) LEAVING MELEOURNE WITH REINFORCEMENTS, FESTOONED WITH FAREWELL RIBBONS PASSED DOWN BY THE TROOPS TO THEIR FRIENDS ON THE QUAY AND SEVERED AT THE MOMENT OF DEPARTURE.



Canal they were in the zone of more or less continuous danger until arrival at their destined place of landing.

Among the rare instances of successful enemy attacks on transports, the circumstances of the loss of the *Ballarat* in April, 1917, will long be remembered with pride by Australians and British alike. The *Ballarat*—or, as she then was, “H.M. Ambulance Transport *Ballarat*, A. 70”—with reinforcements for the Australian Imperial Forces, arrived near the entrance to the English Channel on the 25th of April, 1917, under the escort of H.M.T.B.D. *Phoenix*. At 2 p.m. on that day, although fifty look-out men were stationed on each side of the ship in addition to the official watches, she was struck by a torpedo from an unseen submarine. The explosion, which was terrific, carried away the starboard propeller, bent the port propeller shaft, wrecked the gun supports, and split the 6-inch gun which was mounted on the steering-house. The main steam-pipe of the engines and the wireless acrials were wrecked, and the watertight bulkhead from the tunnel to the engine-room was buckled and fractured. The ship filled rapidly, and the main engines were soon under water.

S.O.S. signals were sent out immediately from the wireless reserve apparatus, and the signal sounded for troops and crew to go to boat stations.

In a few minutes more than twenty boats had been sent away; rafts were put out and troops transferred to these. Destroyers were observed approaching the ship, and these picked up the troops and crew from the boats and rafts. H.M.T.B. *Lookout* then ranged alongside, and more troops were transferred to her. The ship was deep in the water and none among the troops remaining on board knew in how few minutes she might founder.

Then occurred one of those splendid examples of discipline in the face of danger which in all ages have been commended. In reply to the commander's question as to how many more men the *Lookout* could take, her officer commanding replied, "Thirty." An order was given to the troops fallen in on the promenade deck: "From the right, thirty file—right turn—quick march." Directly he had spoken the commander realised that he had set in motion double the number of men who could be taken; the troops were on the move, but the additional order: "Rear rank—stand fast," brought thirty Australian soldiers to the halt while their comrades passed on to safety.

Thus they remained until one of H.M. drifters arrived alongside and completed the work of rescue.

Chief Officer D. M. Halton, Chief Engineer J. Cosgrove, Second Officer E. Parker, Carpenter W. Holland, and Bos'n. G. Price remained on board with the commander, for, having seen his troops away, his next care was to save his ship, if it could by any means be accomplished. With the assistance of six A.B.s, sent aboard by the commander of H.M.T.B.D. *Acasta*, hawsers were passed, and H.M. Drifter *Midge* and another destroyer commenced towing the *Ballarat* towards the Lizard, the *Phoenix* all the time steaming round to ward off further attack, the *Acasta* and H.M. Drifter *Saurin* standing by, and other drifters making fast astern to assist in towing and steering. But all efforts to bring the ship to shallow water were without avail; at half-past four in the morning, when only seven and a half miles off the Lizard Light, she sank in forty-four fathoms of water. The commander (Captain G. W. Cockman, R.D., D.S.C.) and his salvage crew had just previously left her. The entire ship's company of 1,752 souls had been removed without a single casualty !

P. and O. steamers of the "M" class seem to

have been singled out by submarine commanders, and their great length and distinctive character made them an easy mark.

The P. and O. Company's Australian mail steamer *Medina*, a vessel of 12,350 tons gross register and valued at many thousands of pounds, began her career afloat, as already mentioned, as a royal yacht. She was torpedoed without warning by an enemy submarine on the evening of the 28th of April, 1917, and three and a quarter hours later was at the bottom of the sea. She had left Plymouth, after receiving confidential route orders, at 4 p.m.; channel watches were posted with double lookouts on the bridge, fore-castle, and crow's-nest, and the commander, Captain H. S. Bradshaw, was in personal charge when the vessel was hit. The torpedo was first sighted by the quartermaster on watch on the starboard side of the bridge, and although the helm was at once put hard over, the torpedo struck, blowing up the after part of the hurricane deck and penetrating the engine-room. At the same time the commander observed, from the bridge indicators, that the engines had stopped. As the vessel appeared to be settling rapidly, boats were ordered away, all passengers and crew taking their places without

confusion. After assuring himself that everybody was out of the ship, and sinking all secret papers and books, the commander left her at 6.45 p.m., but remained by her in his boat until she sank half an hour later. Destroyers and motor-launch patrols, in response to the *Medina's* wireless signals, arrived and took the boats in tow, eleven to Dartmouth and two to Brixham. The roll-call showed that the engineer of the watch—Fourth Engineer Palmer—and four native firemen were missing, and there is no doubt that they were killed at their posts by the explosion of the torpedo in the engine-room.

A torpedo fired at another vessel of the "M" class, the *Malwa*, at 6.45 a.m. on the 12th of May, 1917, passed close under her stern, missing the rudder by about three feet; a second torpedo also passed astern of the ship. But this second torpedo found a billet in another vessel of the convoy and sank her, fortunately without loss of life.

On the 30th of November of the same year, when the *Malwa* was in the Irish Sea, her lookout sighted a submarine on the port beam showing about eight feet of conning-tower above water. The ship was ordered to bring the submarine astern, a signal to the escort hoisted, and all hands mus-

tered at boat stations. The escort turned to attack the submarine, which submerged, and was promptly followed by a depth charge, with what result was not ascertained. Four minutes after sighting the submarine, those on board the *Mahwa* felt the shock of collision under water, and the forward lookout reported a long dark object disappearing under the forefoot. The wells were sounded, but as the carpenter reported no change of level since the previous sounding the commander dispersed the crew from boat stations, and proceeded. There seems to be little doubt that there were two submarines in company, and that the *Mahwa* collided with, and probably sank, the second as she was in process of coming to the surface.

The steamers of the P. and O. fleet named the "K" class, six in number, all survived the war. One, the *Kalyan*, in early days, lacking defensive armament, mounted a pair of galley funnels gun-wise and passed up Channel unmolested. Such a ruse soon became unnecessary, for guns were already in course of issue.

Another vessel of the "K" class, the *Kashmir* (Captain C. E. Irving, R.N.R.), on passage from Messina to Alexandria, midway between Malta



and Crete had a brush with the enemy on the 8th of June, 1917. Her mast-head lookout, Quartermaster F. Archer, observed a submarine periscope and its wash bearing east (magnetic) on the port beam about two and a half miles distant. The second officer in charge of the watch, Mr. Horton, in accordance with standing orders, put the submarine astern by altering the ship's course, and made the prearranged signals, by flag and steam whistle, to the escort. H.M.S. *Nemesis*, senior officer of escorts, promptly covered the *Kashmir* by throwing out a smoke screen, and the latter was navigated away at sixteen knots. The submarine continued to follow in the *Kashmir's* wake, during which time, while the latter gained distance, the escorts continued to manœuvre, and the *Kashmir's* gunners remained at stations. These measures were effective. Finding the position uncomfortable, the submarine submerged, and the *Kashmir*, which was carrying 2,079 troops, 57 officers, and a crew of 207 persons, regained the route line and continued her voyage.

Even by the summer of 1917 it was not possible to give every ship protective escort within the danger zone. In many cases ships if they could not run had to take up the submarine challenge single-

handed. A fine example is afforded by the case of the *Palma* (Captain Edmund Burton Bartlett), a cargo vessel of twelve knots speed and 12,000 tons deadweight capacity. On the 18th of June, 1917, at 3.15 p.m., on a voyage from New York to Liverpool, when in a position 300 miles to the westward of the Irish coast with a valuable cargo, the *Palma* was attacked by two submarines, one on each side of the ship. Although the *Palma's* huge hull and moderate speed should have made her an easy mark, the enemy vessels from first to last were out-manceuvred and out-fought. Three torpedoes were fired, but all were avoided, though one cleared her rudder by a few feet only. The submarines at the same time were brought close astern. This gave the *Palma's* gunner his chance. Six shots were fired, which the commander had good reason to assume took effect, for no more was seen of the enemy, although the ship remained for a sufficient time helpless, save for her gun, against further attack. The *Palma's* S.O.S. call was answered by an American torpedo gunboat and a British auxiliary. "No other incident," says Captain Bartlett, "occurred for the remainder of the voyage."

The modest reticence of the official report



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CONVOY THROWING OUT SMOKE SCREEN TO BATTLE ATTACKING SUBMARINE



must atone for an inadequate account of what was undoubtedly a gallant fight. For this action Captain Bartlett was awarded the O.B.E. of the Fourth Class, and the War-Risks Advisory Committee sent to each member of the ship's company a copy of the resolution placing on record the Committee's high sense of the conduct of the commander, his officers and crew. This was accompanied by a substantial monetary grant (supplemented by the P. and O. Company) for proportionate distribution.

Another of the "K" class, the *Khiva* (Captain H. W. Potter, R.N.R.), in 1917 twice avoided an advancing torpedo by prompt manœuvring off the Island of Sicily. The dates were the 29th of March and the 16th of July respectively. The first time, at a moment when the ship, which was zigzagging, had just been brought to a new course, Mr. W. Rollo, chief officer, keeping the morning watch, observed at 1,000 yards distance a torpedo track coming towards the ship on a line fifteen degrees abaft the starboard beam. The *Khiva's* helm was put hard a-starboard and the torpedo passed close under her stern; but at this point it seems to have been deflected by the wash of the *Khiva's* propellers, for it completely reversed its

direction, soon afterwards jumping out of the water, and then disappearing from view. As the sea was choppy, and a dark cloud background gave poor visibility, the submarine's periscope was not seen.

The second attack happened at 8.30 p.m., on the *Khiva's* homeward voyage, when she was about fifty miles west of Cape San Petro, the south-west corner of Sicily. Darkness had nearly fallen, but the chief officer detected the torpedo as it parted the sea on its discharge from the submarine; the ship was manœuvred, and the torpedo passed fifteen yards astern—a sufficiently narrow margin.

The name of the *Salsette* is familiar to thousands, for before the war she was the express passenger steamer running across the Indian Ocean between Aden and Bombay. Many will give her memory the tribute of a regretful thought.

The *Salsette* had perforce to be employed out of her accustomed waters while the war was on. On the 19th of July, 1917, Captain A. B. Armitage, R.N.R., in charge, she brought up in the Downs at 7 p.m. with the Channel pilot on board. At 10.30 p.m. she received orders to get under way on her voyage to Bombay.

On approaching the Shambles Lightship, the

course was signalled by the patrol vessel, and the ship went on. Two minutes after noon the next day, as the commander entered the chart-room with a view to marking the chart and altering the ship's course, the chief officer, who was on the monkey-bridge taking bearings, was heard to shout "Hard a-starboard." At the same moment the commander, who had darted out of the chart-room repeating the order, heard the explosion of a torpedo, and saw some of the starboard boats crumple up, while an immense volume of water was hurled on to the hurricane deck. Feeling that the ship was doomed, he moved the engine-room telegraph to "Stop," and gave the signal, "Abandon ship and engine-room." Although the voyage had only just begun, passengers had already been given emergency drill. They and the crew, European and Indian, showed exemplary discipline, for in less than five minutes all boats were away with the exception of No. 3 life-boat, which, in charge of the second officer, stood by for the commander and the few officers and men retained on board. Confidential papers and books were put overboard in the weighted bag. Destroyers and patrol boats were meanwhile racing towards the scene, and in no long time all those in the

boats were picked up. After seeing that the ship had been completely abandoned, the commander, with the remaining officers and crew, pulled a short distance away and waited, but not for long; fifty minutes after she had been struck she sank.

The *Salsette* was a high-speed mail steamer of fine lines and of great power; and, notwithstanding that all her watertight doors were shut and her main deck scuttles fitted with dead lights and screwed down, she could not long survive the inrush of water following upon extensive torpedo injury.

Describing the effect of the torpedo on the ship, the commander said, "She became dead, and felt as though she was collapsing like a pack of cards." Spars were, by the explosion, thrown into the air fifty feet above the bridge, one penetrating the cabin, where two officers, who had not long come off watch, were sitting. The crow's-nest ladder, of iron, was shattered, and the lookout man had to slide down the backstay, which carried away when he was a short distance from the deck. The engine-room was immediately filled with steam and smoke, which rendered difficult the escape of the Indian crew, fourteen of whom lost their lives.

The survivors were landed at Weymouth, where the Chief Examination Officer, R.N., made



arrangements for every one, passengers going to the hotels and the crew to the Sailors' Home. Notwithstanding all his anxieties, the commander had not omitted to destroy certain especially secret and confidential Government despatches, which for safe transmission had been committed to his personal charge.

The P. and O. Company's cargo steamer *Candia* (Captain C. G. Smith, R.N.R.) left Falmouth for London at 0.29 a.m. (noon) on the 26th of July, 1917. At Falmouth the route officer had ordered Captain Smith to pass close south of the Owers Light Vessel, but by further written instructions he learned that a dangerous area extended some four miles to the southward and eastward of the light vessel.

By the time the ship reached Portland night had fallen; it was very dark and there was a heavy traffic of ships, many crossing between Channel ports, and all, like the *Candia*, steaming without lights. This continued until shortly before day-break. At 3.38 a.m. the ship had reached the extremity of the dangerous area, and the commander set the first course of a zigzag from the Owers. Steaming at twelve knots, she was, at 3.58 a.m., hauling up to a course approximately north-

east, which would have taken her in the direction of Brighton, and into the inshore Admiralty route. Before she had completed the movement, she was struck by a torpedo or mine at the break of the poop on the starboard side, and her stern at once commenced to sink rapidly. The commander gave the order to abandon ship. The sea was smooth, with a south-westerly breeze, and the weather was fine and clear. Four boats, sufficient for all the crew, were got away, notwithstanding the fact that there was still considerable speed on the ship. Thirty minutes after the explosion three patrol vessels arrived and picked up those in the boats. Five minutes later the ship sank. She was carrying 9,000 tons of grain and other foodstuffs from Australia. One life was lost: lascar Buuar Tindal, on lookout in one of the boats, was killed by falling débris.

The *Mooltan*, one of the P. and O. steamers, save on the occasion mentioned in Chapter VIII., ran free of incident for nearly three years. At the time of her destruction she was homeward bound with mails from Australia, the Far East, India, and Egypt, and had on board a ship's company, including passengers and crew, of 554 souls. The vessel was called into Malta by naval signal,

and left there at 5 p.m. on the 25th of July, 1917, with the Messageries Maritimes steamer *Lotus*, under escort of two Japanese destroyers of the 2nd Flotilla, *Ume* and *Kusonoki*. All went well until 7.15 p.m. next day, when a torpedo was sighted 700 or 800 yards away on the starboard beam, coming towards the *Mooltan* at high speed from a submarine which was not seen, but which, from the direction of the torpedo, the commander considered must have lain submerged on the starboard quarter of the ship. The alarm was sounded on the steam-whistle, and the ship swung rapidly to her helm, which had been at once put hard a-starboard. The torpedo, overtaking her, struck a glancing blow about thirty-five feet abaft the stem on the starboard side, and fifteen feet below the water-line. The explosion threw up a large column of green flame which sheared the rivet heads off the outside plates of the bow; a huge hole was made in the hold, and the decks in the vicinity were burst upwards. Wireless signals were sent out, the engines reversed, and the vessel brought to a standstill. Boats were then lowered containing all passengers and a part of the crew; certain officers, engineers and hands remaining as usual on board with the commander. The escorting destroyers

acted promptly, one circling round the *Mooltan* and throwing off volumes of smoke, the other endeavouring to attack the submarine. On inspection, it was found that the forward part of the ship was full of water, and she appeared to be settling by the head.

The position was 100 miles south of Sardinia. The *Lotus*, the other ship in convoy, had 1,600 souls on board. There was not the remotest hope of the *Mooltan* keeping long afloat; and the commander of the escort hoisted signals to abandon ship as soon as possible. From his point of view it was necessary at least to ensure the safety of the *Lotus*. The *Mooltan's* commander and his officers and engineers were loth to leave their ship, but more urgent signals left them no alternative, with darkness coming on, but to obey. At 8.15 p.m. the last two boats reached the destroyers, in which were now the whole of the people removed from the *Mooltan*. The *Lotus* had gone away at full speed, and the destroyers hurried to join her. As soon as the moon had set the escorts were brought one alongside the other, and in the darkness seventy of the *Mooltan's* crew transferred to equalise the numbers in each vessel.

The next day was an anxious one, for the ships

were passing through a dangerous area, and the bright moonlight night which succeeded it did not much abate the anxiety. At 1 a.m. on the 28th of July the now reduced convoy reached Marseilles, and at 3 a.m. passengers and crew were landed and taken charge of by the P. and O. Company's agents, who, apprised by wireless, had made efficient arrangements for their accommodation. Passengers were cared for at the various hotels at the Company's expense. Twelve hours after arrival at Marseilles they left that port by special train, and arrived in London on the following day.

Although pressed with many duties after the ship had been struck, the commander had the special mails, which were in his personal charge, safely got into a boat, and was able to deliver them at Marseilles to one of the King's Messengers. Mr. Pritchard, second officer, and Mr. Mackie, third officer, handed over to the Marine Superintendent in London two chronometers which they had salvaged from the *Mooltan* on leaving her.

For the great kindness shown on board the Japanese destroyers to the whole ship's company the thanks of the P. and O. Company were tendered to the Japanese Government through the Japanese Ambassador in London.

Not every ship had a string of encounters to her name. A few ships ran free throughout the war; many voyages were completed without incident, although the tension must, in the dangerous waters, have been continuous. The *Nankin* records only one "miss" and that was a somewhat curious case. Midway between Start Point and Portland Bill on the 7th of August, 1917, she was altering course eight points when a torpedo was discharged at her from an unseen enemy. It was observed, by the two quartermasters on watch at the ship's gun, to pass from starboard to port twelve feet from the ship's stern. The fact that she was changing direction at the time was a happy coincidence, for the movement swung her clear of the line of danger.

The employment in 1917 of steamers under requisition by the Shipping Controller, mentioned in the opening chapter, took the P. and O. Company's steamers, no less than those of other companies, far out of their ordinary beat. The *Peshawar* (H.M.T. "E 8210"), bound for the United Kingdom from Sydney, Nova Scotia, was torpedoed off the Irish coast.

She had steamed in convoy under escort until reaching Tor Head, Ireland, where, at 4 p.m.

on the 9th of October (the convoy having been formed "line ahead" since the previous evening), the signal to disperse was given, and the *Peshawur's* commander instructed to steam in company with other three vessels and to hug the Irish coast. The *Peshawur* had passed South Rock Lighthouse about a mile distant, and a course was then set which would have taken her five miles east of Kish Light Vessel. At this moment a heavy trembling of the ship was felt: she had been torpedoed on the port side, full in the engine compartment.

The commander blew the alarm whistle, hoisted the red burgee (danger flag), and directed the two starboard life-boats to be lowered. The ship was settling aft, but was upright, the wind fresh on the starboard bow, with a choppy sea. The chief engineer reported the engine-room full of water, and the port life-boat blown up. Three life-boats and two cutters remained, ample for all. All hands were called on deck. The commander ordered crews into the two starboard boats, which had been lowered to the rail, and then held on, hoping the ship would keep afloat. The deck and deck-houses were searched to ensure that no one was left behind; then, fearing a second

torpedo and the sudden foundering of the ship, the commander gave orders to lower boats to the water, let go, and make sail. As sail was set the periscope of a submarine was seen to cross the bow of the captain's boat, and simultaneously a second torpedo struck the ship with a deafening roar on the starboard side, forward of the bridge, close to the spot where a few minutes earlier the boats had been. The ship heeled to starboard, then partially righted herself and settled more deeply in the water. For a short time the boats lay to, but as the wind and sea were driving them to leeward the captain gave orders to get under way and sail for the land. The periscope was again seen to pass the captain's boat at about fifty yards distance, and the submarine then made off to the eastward. After sailing for about an hour and a half those in the boats observed the Patrol Yacht *Albion III.* coming from the north. Her captain had orders to stop all vessels going southward and send them into Belfast Lough. Six, he had already turned back. By chance he had continued on a southerly run until he fell in with the boat in which was the *Peshawur's* commander.

He picked up the other four boats, took their occupants aboard his vessel and, making the boats



fast astern, proceeded towards the *Peshawur*. At dusk she was seen to be still afloat, but shortly afterwards was obscured by the oncoming night. The wind and sea were rising. The *Albion III.* continued to cruise around, but as nothing could now be seen of the *Peshawur* the skipper put his ship towards the north and shaped a course for Belfast Lough. On the passage to Belfast the boats broke loose and were lost.

The crew of the *Peshawur* numbered 125 hands. Only 112 answered to the roll-call. The third engineer, one European winchman, and eleven natives had been killed by the explosion or drowned in the engine-room.

The *Palma*, *Peshawur*, *Pera*, and *Poona*, sister ships, formed a group in the P. and O. fleet, each unit of which comes variously within the purview of these records. The loss of the *Peshawur* was followed ten days later by that of the *Pera*.

At the time of the *Pera's* destruction she was on a voyage from Liverpool to Calcutta. On the 19th of October, at 11.10 a.m., when in the eastern Mediterranean sixty miles east of Ras el Tin, or about 400 miles west of Alexandria, she was torpedoes. The *Pera*, one of a convoy of eleven vessels steaming line abreast, was the outside

ship on the right wing. The chief officer, who, simultaneously with the alarm from the crow's-nest lookout, saw the approaching torpedo about 600 yards away, promptly put the helm hard a-port, and rang "full speed" on the port engine, but without avail. The commander gained the bridge in time to see the torpedo strike the vessel on the starboard side in No. 5 hold, the bulkhead of which was burst in by the explosion, so that water at once began to pour into the engine-room. Finding the engine-room telegraph jammed and getting no response by telephone, he sent word to stop the engines and order the crew on deck. But the engineer of the watch had been injured by the explosion and knocked down by the inrush of water, and was got out with some difficulty. Third Engineer Wilkinson then made his way, at considerable personal risk, through the stowhold and shut off steam.

By this time the ship had listed to port, and the after well deck was awash. Fearing she would capsize owing to the weight of coal in the 'tween decks, the commander ordered the boats to be lowered, which was successfully done, although there was still some way on the ship. No. 1 life-boat let go her painter, dropped down on to the

boat astern and capsized her. No. 2 life-boat, towing alongside, was dashed against the ship's plating by a heavy swell and stove in. But everyone wore a life-belt, and all were picked up by the other boats without difficulty.

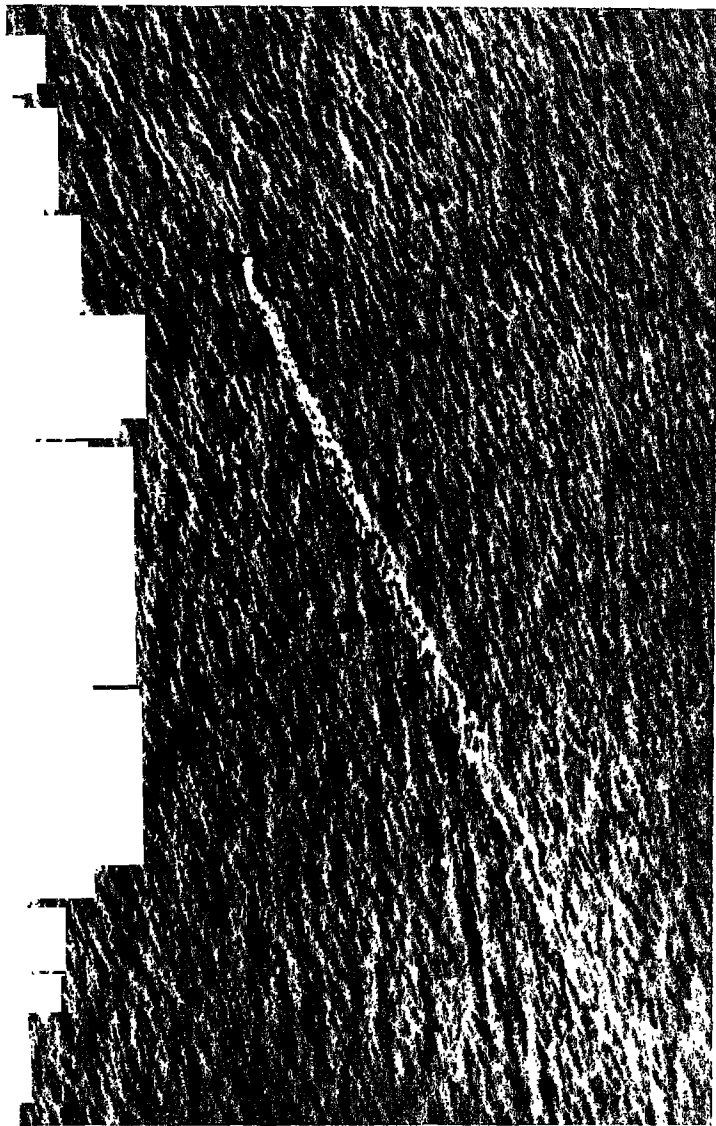
The ship then righted herself and so remained until she sank by the stern forty minutes after being torpedoed. Of the twenty-eight Europeans and eighty-six natives composing her company, only one paniwallah was lost; at the time of the explosion he had been on duty on the second platform of the engine-room in the line of the torpedo's approach.

The crew were picked up by one of the escort, H.M.S. *Ulematis*, in which vessel, needless to say, they received kindly treatment; and were, two days later, landed at Alexandria.

Another loss—the *Namur*, a twin-screw passenger and cargo ship of 6,701 tons gross—occurred on the 29th of October. Thus, in twenty-one days the P. and O. Company alone had lost 24,000 gross tons of shipping. The *Namur*, approaching Gibraltar, homeward bound in convoy, was struck at 9 o'clock in the morning by a torpedo at the point where a transverse bulkhead divided two of the after compartments of her hold, both

of which were at once flooded. At the moment of impact the ship was zigzagging thirty degrees on either hand, as ordered, and the escort, two and a half cables distant on the starboard bow, was describing a super-zigzag ahead of the convoy. On the upper bridge of the *Namur* Captain Finch and his third officer were keeping watch, one quartermaster and two lascars were on lookout on the lower bridge, one quartermaster in the crow's-nest, one lascar on forecastle head, and aft, two of the gun's crew.

The S.O.S. was sent out, and answered by Gibraltar, the engines stopped, a signal made for boat quarters, and the position of the submarine signalled to the escort. The third engineer of the watch, P. S. James, after shutting off steam, examined the watertight doors fore and aft of the engine-room, and found them closed; no water was at that time entering the engine-room, and the engines were intact. Passengers and crew were placed in the boats, which were lowered as soon as way was off the ship. The chief engineer then attempted to re-enter the engine-room, but was driven back by escaping steam. The ship, still upright, was sinking by the stern as the commander, chief officer, surgeon, and chief steward,



*By courtesy of the Imperial War Museum.*

**THE "FEATHER" OR WAKE OF A SUBMARINE'S PERISCOPE.**



in the last boat, left her. Twenty minutes later, and forty minutes after the explosion, with her auxiliary machinery still working, she disappeared.

The occupants of the boats were picked up by a destroyer, and soon after midday reached Gibraltar. One life was lost—of two native firemen who fell out of a boat as it was being lowered one, already unconscious when taken from the water, failed to respond to treatment.

Once before the *Namur* had encountered a submarine. Between Malta and the Island of Pentellaria at 1 a.m. on the 14th of June, 1916, in bright moonlight, a torpedo was launched at her, passing fifty yards astern.

The *Nyanza*, a sister ship of the *Namur*, survived two deadly attacks, either of which might, had she been in less capable hands, have ended her. By way of overture when she was approaching Marseilles homeward bound, in convoy, on the 2nd of November, 1917, her navigating officer sighted, about the time of sunset, a large enemy submarine six miles distant on the port bow. The escorting vessel was warned and immediately went to the attack, dropping two depth charges over the spot where, at her approach, the submarine had dived. Four days later, on the same voyage, shortly

after sunset, the *Nyanza's* lookout reported a submarine on the starboard beam; course was altered to southward, and a signal made to the escort, which drove the submarine under water.

She reached London safely on the 20th of November, discharged her valuable cargo of food-stuffs, was stored and loaded. To her former armament of one 4.7-inch gun were added two 7.5-inch howitzers for the projection of depth charges. On the 6th of December, with Captain Charles Grant Smith, R.N.R., in command, she set out again from the Downs for Calcutta, joining up with a convoy of twenty-three vessels which left Plymouth on the 9th of December under the escort of a man-of-war and eight destroyers. The same evening, when at the mouth of the Channel, she was, notwithstanding her armament and escort and a vigilant lookout in all directions, attacked by an enemy submarine and torpedoed in the port side. Six passengers, the steward-in-charge, Mr. P. G. Barker, Storekeeper Ernest H. Orrin, Quartermaster H. Jones, and forty-four of the native crew lost their lives as a result of the attack. The ship's hull was severely damaged, but by the efforts of the commander and his ship's company she was brought into Falmouth, there discharged and



docked, and, having been temporarily repaired, set out for London on the 23rd of February, 1918, escorted by two armed trawlers.

Near midnight on the 24th of February, zig-zagging up Channel in threatening weather and a rough sea and showing no lights, she was, when five miles south of Brighton, attacked by a submarine from a position on her starboard quarter, and struck by a torpedo abrcast of the engine-room. The explosion tore a hole in the ship's side, wrecked the starboard engine, as well as two of her life-boats, and nearly all the gear on that side of the ship, and put her wireless out of action. Fourth Engineer Mollison (whose father had served the P. and O. Company as a chief engineer), a salvage officer, and two panivallahs were killed.

Within a short time of the explosion all the boats which remained undamaged had been got away without accident, and their occupants picked up by the trawlers. Hawasers were passed to the ship, and the trawlers began to tow her slowly towards the shore, for the only hope lay in beaching her if, by seamanship and good fortune, she could so long be kept afloat. More than once during the winter night the master and his volunteers boarded the ship to pass and secure fresh hawsers.

At a quarter past four, in the darkness of this February morning, news was brought by a tug that two hostile submarines were near, lying in wait to get a first glimpse and a second shot at the stricken ship in the deadly half light of dawn. Leaving the newcomer to assist in the towage, one of the armed trawlers, the *Sheldon*, on which were the *Nyanza's* master and pilot, set out to find the enemy craft and drive them from the neighbourhood. The *Sheldon* returned, her mission accomplished; hawsers parted and were again and again made fast, for the ship was heavy with water, and deep in draught. Day broke at last. After fourteen difficult hours the *Nyanza* was brought within reach of the shore. Fortunately no life was lost during the night, although the efforts to keep connection with the towing craft were fraught with considerable risk.

When the master and some of his crew went on board, preparatory to the ship taking the ground, she was almost submerged, with her well decks awash on the starboard side; four out of her seven watertight compartments were flooded, and she was listing twenty-five degrees. In this state she was beached in an exposed position east of New-haven Pier. Here she was patched, and hence

two months later floated off and navigated to Portsmouth.

In recognition of their services when the *Nyanza* was first torpedoed in December, 1917, Captain Smith and Mr. A. B. Vaughan, chief officer, were awarded Lloyd's silver medal, Quartermasters Perry and Burne, Lloyd's bronze medal, and they, together with Mr. J. M. Watson, chief engineer, received an expression (accompanied in each case by a cheque) of Sir Joseph Maclay's appreciation, as Shipping Controller, of the gallantry displayed by all. Substantial recognition was also bestowed by the Liverpool and London War-Risks Association on the commander, chief officer, and two quartermasters. As an "appreciation of his gallantry and seamanship" in bringing his ship to Newhaven after she had again been torpedoed in February, the Merchant Ships Gratuity Committee awarded to Captain Smith a further honorarium, and cheques were also handed to the Channel pilot, Mr. E. J. Evans, and the four members of the crew who attended on the ship on her passage to the shore.

Save that she was in 1915 the object of abortive plotting by enemy agents in China, mischief from which cause was avoided by the prudence

of her commander and the P. and O. Agent in Shanghai, the *Sardinia* ran free of incident for more than three years of the war. In November, 1917, this happy monotony was disturbed. On her passage to the East, between Gibraltar and Malta, escorted by a destroyer, the quartermaster on watch reported a "suspicious object" abeam. Immediately afterwards the commander saw a torpedo approaching on the starboard quarter, and manœuvred to avoid it. Bringing his gun to bear as his ship swung to helm and engines, an effort was made to hit the submerging enemy by firing, at 1,000 yards range, on the wake-line of the torpedo, which was at that moment missing the ship by a few feet. A quick order to the helmsman and a movement of the engine-room telegraph had set in instant motion the forces which deflected the ship's four hundred and fifty feet of length from the torpedo's path. The gun's crew in these dangerous waters was already at stations. Between the sighting of the submarine and the passage of the torpedo under the ship's stern, the time which elapsed was exactly forty-five seconds.

The quartermaster received the Yarrow grant for being the first to sight the submarine; while

he, the commander, and the officer and engineers of the watch were officially commended and received certificates of good service from the Admiralty.

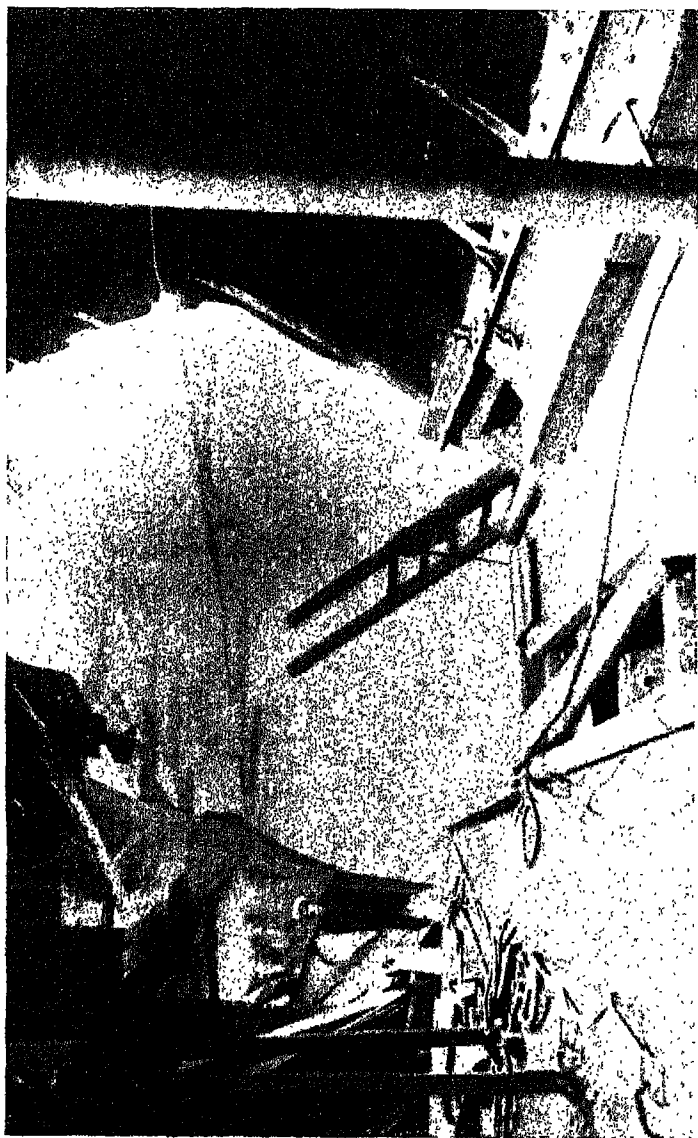
The *Sardinia* was destined on her homeward passage for a more exciting adventure, and in her next brush was not to come off scot-free. In darkness (7.42 p.m.), on the 4th of February, 1918, whilst steaming in convoy through the Mediterranean, laden with a cargo of general merchandise, she was struck by a torpedo on the starboard bow, abaft the chain locker, the torpedo bursting with a terrifying explosion and making a huge breach in the bow plating of the ship under water. All hands were called; the passengers were mustered, and, as she appeared to be sinking, were, with most of the crew, the second officer being in charge, safely transferred in the ship's boats to the attendant warship. The remaining officers and thirty-three men were retained to work the vessel. On examination it was found that the forepeak and the forehold were full of water, but the bulkhead dividing this area from the after part of the ship appeared to be holding. The pressure on this bulkhead, with the forward part of the ship full of water, may be imagined. To steam ahead was

clearly impossible, and the commander decided to navigate his ship backwards and "dead slow" over the sixty-one miles which lay between her and the harbour of Oran.

At 9.10 p.m. the engines were rung on, and the wounded ship began her hazardous passage. The master and his crew—engineers below and the native firemen in the stokehold—all knew that while darkness completely obscured the submarine, it was not sufficient to hide the ship, and although baffled by the attendant destroyer, the enemy was, without doubt, hanging on to launch a second torpedo. All through the long February night went on the monotonous churning of the slowly revolving screw, pulling the ship, stern foremost, at a pace which, even had she been moving bow on, would scarcely have given her steering-way.

She reached Oran the following afternoon after sixteen hours' steaming at a little over three and a half knots, no more than a walking pace, but the water had, in the meantime, increased in No. 1 hold, and risen to the orlop deck, the ship was badly down by the head, and to have brought her safely into port in these conditions was a fine piece of seamanship.

By telegraphic instructions the P. and O.



TORPEDO DAMAGE, P. AND O. S.S. "SARDINIA."





Company cared for the passengers and defrayed their expenses to London.

Captain Cadiz received the thanks of the Admiralty, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the much-coveted Lloyd's silver medal, which was also received by the chief engineer. The latter, together with the chief officer and chief steward, were commended in the *London Gazette*, Lloyd's adding, in each case, a substantial cheque. The ship was patched at Oran and brought to Gibraltar, was there further strengthened, and then navigated to London, where she was completely repaired.

The last contact of a P. and O. ship with an enemy torpedo had a curiously significant result. On the 22nd of September, 1918, the *Malwa* was struck; but the commander, warned of the torpedo's approach, had skilfully manœuvred his vessel, and the torpedo, running nearly parallel at the time of impact, glanced off the ship's plating and failed to explode. So it was with the submarine war: designed for complete destruction of the allied cause, it seemed to approach the consummation of its deadly purpose; but, misdirected, passed away, its purpose unfulfilled.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SUBMARINE WAR—III. B. I. COMPANY

ALTHOUGH her loss should properly find a later place in the dated narrative of the many submarine sinkings suffered in the war by the British India Company, the *Mashobra's* war story as a whole claims an early place. With Captain H. J. Brooks in command, she was one of the first ships to disembark troops for the Gallipoli Peninsula on the morning of the 25th of April, 1915. The sea between the transports and the beach was white with shrapnel; many boats were hit, and in some cases every man on board was killed. Some boats were capsized by the wash of the destroyers, and their troops thrown into the water, where, in the inferno of the landing, any pause for rescue-work was impossible. All around men-of-war kept up a continuous fire, and the guns of the *Queen Elizabeth*, which was next to the *Mashobra*, shook her from stem to stern. Eleven-inch shells from the *Goeben*, fired from the Narrows across the

Peninsula, began to fall around; some missed transport or warship by inches, one passed between the *Mashobra's* funnel and her bridge, the rush of air from its passage knocking the military signalman off the chart-room and throwing the commander to the deck. The *Goeben* had too large a mark in the crowded fleet of anchored transports, and an order came from the flagship that they should disperse, and take up more widely scattered positions. What this sudden manœuvre meant under such conditions may be imagined from the fact that over a hundred transports, with boat booms out, were crowded together and anchored in thirty fathoms of water with anything from sixty to a hundred fathoms of cable to haul in. All the ships got out somehow, but ships' boats were adrift everywhere. Two of the *Mashobra's* lifeboats went a missing in the mêlée, but were found, minus gear, four days later.

The ever-swelling stream of casualties resulting from the landing and the fighting ashore necessitated the use of transports for the carriage of wounded, and the *Mashobra* was soon impressed for this service, although she had no proper equipment, and was without beds or mattresses. The wounded were hove up from the boats in impro-

vised cradles, laid on the troop decks or the deck of the saloons, and tended as gently as might be. Fortunately, three medical men had been left on board, and to these fell the duty of treating the five hundred casualties which, in the short time before she sailed, had accumulated. It says much for the devotion and skill of these overworked doctors that only fifteen men died on the voyage to Alexandria.

The crew took things as they came; the one small grumble of the British members was that they found themselves engaged in war at peace-time rates of pay. This was only nominally the case, for advanced rates came automatically into force as each ship paid off. While the British seaman rarely misses a chance to indulge in a minor grievance, it is also his habit cheerfully to face the gravest peril which he or his ship may encounter in the pursuit of his calling. This is not confined to the forecandle; the commander of a transport in his report after the Gallipoli landing operations dwells upon the difficulty he experienced, for some days while the transports were assembling, in feeding a number of military officers in excess of his allotted schedule. To the fact that he and his crew were under hot fire during the landing he makes

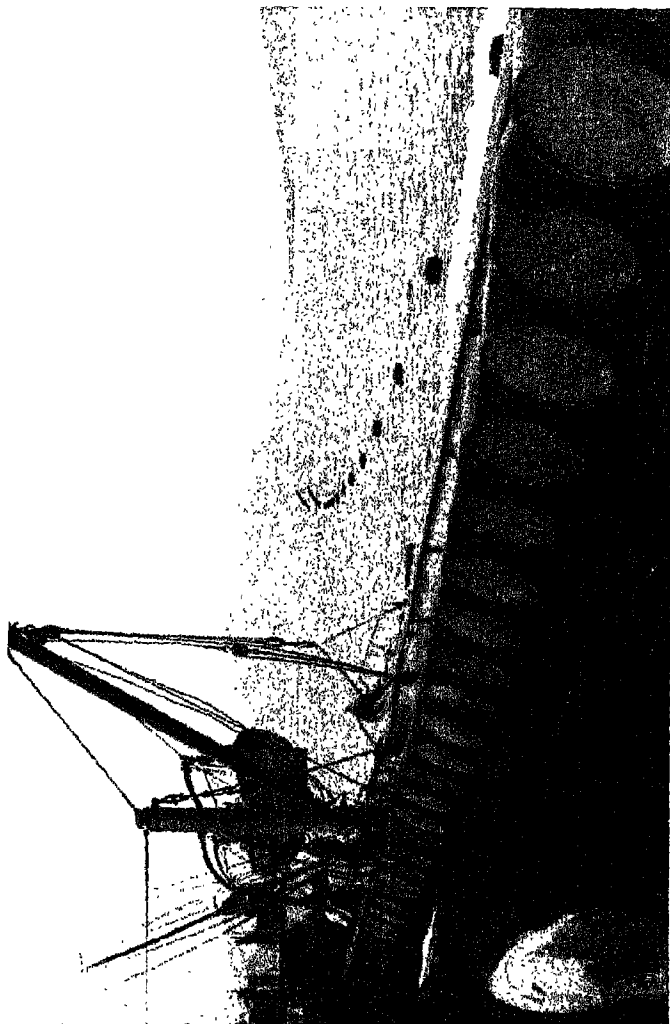
but the faintest allusion, and that chiefly in explanation of the loss or damage of his ship's life-boats.

The *Mashobra*—and her case may be taken as typical of many—was then employed, sometimes carrying reinforcements, at others towing barges, sometimes carrying armament and stores. Her work was not rendered easier by the appearance in the Eastern Mediterranean of enemy submarines. As a consequence, ships proceeded to Lemnos and anchored behind the booms to await convoy; nearer the Dardanelles all navigation was done at night, without lights of any kind. Casualties to ships from this cause were, however, surprisingly few. But there were other risks besides those of blind navigation. On one occasion the *Mashobra*, her fore-deck completely filled with petrol in cans, and carrying a fleet of R.N.A.S. armoured cars, was attacked by a hostile aeroplane in the course of a bombing-raid. On another those on board were close witnesses of the sinking by an enemy submarine of the dummy battleship *Tiger*. Through all these adventures it is gratifying to note that the native crew, who plainly disliked repeatedly going up to the fighting area, nevertheless behaved well. Opportunities for desertion occurred time after time, but not a

native seaman or fireman was lost to the ship from this cause.

On the 15th of April, 1917, after more than two years of varied and useful service, the *Mashobra*, then in the Ionian Sea, south of Corfu, was attacked by an Austrian submarine. The torpedo made a huge breach abreast the engine and boiler-rooms, which were immediately flooded. Eight natives of the engineers' staff were drowned or killed. Among other damage the wireless aerials were destroyed and the Marconi house wrecked. Captain Brooks was ordered on board the submarine, and from her deck gave final instructions for assurance of the safety of his boats. The submarine then fired seventy rounds at the ship, which at 1.40 p.m. went down stern first. Half an hour later the survivors were picked up by trawlers, and were next morning landed at Malta.

During the ensuing eight days the submarine, on her passage to the Bocche de Cattaro, was three times attacked by allied craft and three times narrowly escaped. Captain Brooks was landed at Castelnuovo on the 23rd of April. Without money, with but little clothing, and for his only food "scraps" from his guard's rations, he remained for three days and nights in a fortress



LAYING NET DEFENCE OFF CON DIA, INDIOS, 1916.

*By courtesy of the Imperial War Museum.*





cell, without bed or bedding, sleeping on a wet stone floor, with a couple of tattered and verminous blankets for his only covering. The succeeding four days and nights he spent in a cattle-truck, with one scanty meal a day, travelling to Graz. Arrived there, he was kept in solitary confinement in a filthy room, deprived of exercise, his food disgusting in kind and insufficient in quantity. After thirty-one days of this régime, his legs almost lacked strength to support his emaciated body. In the prison camp of Salzerbad, to which, more dead than alive, he was next removed, the process of slow starvation continued, a week's daily rations amounting in bulk to no more than three ordinary moderate meals; the food was of poor quality, and frequently bad. Food parcels sent from England by the British India Company through the Red Cross Society were more often than not stolen outright. Of these thefts the Red Cross system of serial numbering of each individual's parcels afforded ample evidence. Those packages which did get through were plundered, and in some cases bricks or rubbish were substituted for the original contents. The British India Company continued throughout his imprisonment to remit to Captain Brooks his pay as commander, but

extra food was but rarely purchasable, and then only with great difficulty. Twice a week the prisoner was permitted to take a walk of one mile with an armed guard. Thus eighteen months passed until, getting news of the Austro-Italian armistice, the prison guards deserted their posts. Captain Brooks and three fellow-prisoners—all British steamship commanders—then made their way by weary stages to Trieste, bribing engine-drivers and station-masters, during the four days' journey, for passage and food. An Italian destroyer conveyed them to Venice, whence they were passed on to the British military authorities and, after some delay, sent through by rail to England.

In the British India Company's records one of the earliest instances of attack was that on the *Torilla*, a vessel of 5,205 gross tons. On the 3rd of December, 1915, she was on a trooping voyage from Port Said to Marseilles, her passenger accommodation filled with officers' wives and children, and in her 'tween decks 800 horses and mules. At 1.35 p.m. an enemy submarine was sighted one and a half to two points on the port bow, distant about four miles, shelling a steamer which lay directly ahead, apparently already disabled, with life-boats under sail in the water alongside



"MAHOBRA" (B I COMPANY) ON FIRE AND SINKING AFTER BLIND TORPEDOED

Photographed by the Australian Submarine (comm unit.)



her. The *Torilla* was immediately turned about, the wireless distress call sent out, all hands mustered with life-belts, the signal given for boat stations, boat lashings cut adrift, and preparations made for the expected attack. Those on the bridge saw that the submarine, which had meantime fired a torpedo into the other already damaged vessel, was steaming towards the *Torilla* and directly astern. She appeared to be about 180 feet in length, and armed with three heavy guns. At a range of five miles the submarine opened rapid fire. Passengers were ordered to take shelter on the forward side of the iron bulkheads and deck structures; and the *Torilla* attempted to reply with her 3-inch gun. It was at once seen that she was hopelessly outranged, her shot falling 4,000 yards short. The submarine's commander—whose gunners had, up to now, proved but poor marksmen—gradually reduced his distance within the limit of safety, and made several attempts by his greater speed to open up the *Torilla's* quarter, and thus to enlarge his target; each time he was defeated, for the *Torilla* was manœuvred so as to keep him dead astern. At 2.15—more than half an hour after the attack had begun—the submarine scored her first hit, a shell bursting over the

*Torilla's* No. 2 hatch and sending a few splinters below, but doing no damage.

The engineers and their crew had been doing their best to get up speed, and the ship was now running at thirteen and a half knots. How long the unequal contest would have lasted need not be conjectured; it proved to be sufficient that for nearly an hour, by skilful handling and steady discipline, the submarine commander had been outwitted and the *Torilla* and her crowded company saved from harm.

The *Benalla*, a P. and O. Branch Line steamer of 11,000 tons, with 2,500 troops on board (Captain G. W. Cockman, R.D., R.N.R.), coming up astern, had taken in the *Torilla's* distress signal, and soon afterwards sighted both attacker and attacked. The submarine diverted her fire for a time to the *Benalla* without scoring a hit. The latter's 4.7-inch gun then came into action with good effect, for after three well-directed shots the enemy turned tail and ran. The *Benalla's* commander had learned from an intercepted code position, eighty miles distant, that a warship was approaching in answer to the *Torilla's* S.O.S., but he stood by until darkness fell and then resumed his voyage. For his good service in extricating the

*Torilla* from a threatening situation, and "in recognition of zeal and devotion to duty shown in carrying on the trade of the country during the war," he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The *Torilla* was duly picked up, escorted back to Port Said, and there fitted with a more effective gun.

On the morning of the 5th of April, 1916, as Captain E. Hamlyn of the British India Company's s.s. *Chantala* sat writing in his cabin, a violent explosion shook the ship from stem to stern, the concussion hurling himself, his table and chair across the cabin floor. He took but a second or two to gain the bridge. Getting no answer to the telegraph, he ran to the engine-room, and found it flooded to within six feet of the main deck. The fourth engineer and eight of the natives on duty were never seen again; one native fireman was washed up from the stokehold "through the engines," and, though injured, afterwards recovered. The time was 10.40 a.m. The distress signal and position were sent out by wireless, and three boats with the majority of the crew were got away. By 11 o'clock the ship was down by the head with the fore deck awash; the captain and remaining officers therefore left her and moved

off to the other boats about a mile away. Observing that the settlement of the torpedoed vessel seemed to have ceased, the captain attempted to return to her in the small boat with four European volunteers, but when within thirty yards, a shell struck the water near the boat, quickly followed by two more, and the submarine, on the surface a mile to the westward, was observed to be making for the ship at full speed, firing as she came. The captain's boat was pulled away, followed by four more shots, none of which found the mark. As soon as he was within hailing distance the lieutenant in charge of the submarine ordered the captain to come on board, calling him "English dog," "murderer," and other names.

The captain boarded the enemy craft, made his way to the conning-tower and, in reply to a question, said his ship was from London. The German seemed well informed, and insisted that the ship came from Plymouth, which was true. After taking the commander's photograph the enemy officer ordered him back to his boat, with injunctions to yield up the gunners from the other boats, threatening, if this were not done, to sink them all. He was appeased by the appearance of the gunners alongside, but dismissed them with curses.



German sailors then entered the captain's boat, which was taken in tow by the submarine. Boarding the ship, they hung over the port side, amidships, a bomb, with the explosion of which she fell over to port and in five seconds had disappeared. The survivors were allowed to get away, all boats setting sail for the land, Cape Bengut being about fifteen miles distant. Soon after, they fell in with the P. and O. hospital ship *Devanha*, and were landed at Malta.

It will have been noted that submarines did not confine themselves to torpedo work; they possessed excellent artillery, and their firing was by no means to be lightly regarded.

The British India steamer *Uganda*, at that time His Majesty's Ambulance Transport "A 66" (Captain E. de G. Diamond), had an experience of this on the 17th of June, 1916, within a few hours' steaming of Marseilles. Here she encountered an enemy submarine, position about four points on the starboard bow, which, without warning, opened fire on the ship at a range of about 5,000 yards.

In twenty minutes the submarine fired eight high-explosive shells, making fair practice, for the shells burst close around the ship or overhead; boats were holed, woodwork splintered, and the

dock structures knocked about. Fragments of shell were flying about the bridge to the danger of those on duty, including seacunnie Abdul Hussein, who stuck to the wheel like a white man. Yet the damage to the ship was slight, and the chief engineer's native servant, whose throat was cut, but not dangerously, by a fragment of shell, was the sole casualty.

The submarine did not have it all her own way. Captain Diamond sent out the prescribed wireless call, manœuvred to bring the enemy astern, and opened fire on her at extreme range. The *Uganda's* gun was well served and well laid, for at the sixth shot the submarine, scared or hit, dived and was no more seen. Thus the short encounter ended. Twenty minutes later a French T.B.D. arrived on the scene, and the danger of immediate further attack was at an end.

At the first alarm all hands in the *Uganda*, had been piped to stations; there was no panic: white officers and engineers, native seamen and engine-room hands went quietly to their places. The discomfiture of the submarine commander, and the *Uganda's* escape from more serious damage, perhaps from disaster, must, says Captain Diamond, be chiefly attributed to the manner in which

the entire ship's company carried out their orders in these new and "somewhat exciting circumstances."

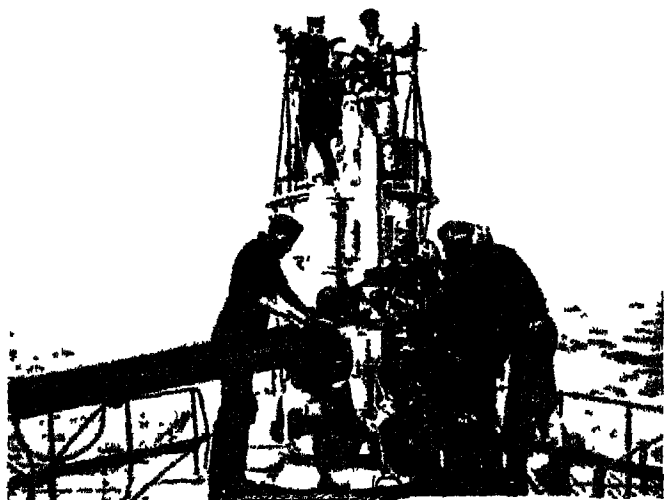
That the advent of a protective friend might also suppose the presence of a potential enemy was demonstrated in the case of the *Mombasa*, one of the B. I. Company's new 8,000-ton Bombay steamers.

At 7.15 a.m. on the 20th of October, 1916, when the *Mombasa*, outward bound, was off the Algerian coast, a French destroyer signalled, "What ship?" Captain Thomson in response hoisted the ship's number and the red ensign. The destroyer then, accommodating her speed to that of the liner, stood along on a parallel course half a mile distant on the latter's port beam. The protection thus offered, however, turned out to be of no avail, for at 7.40 a.m. the vessel was struck by a torpedo from an unseen submarine, and sank in nine minutes. The routine for saving the ship's company was instantly put into operation, passengers assisting the crew to hoist out and lower the boats. The commander, after hurriedly searching the ship, jumped overboard as she was on the point of sinking, and was picked up. The boats were pulled away

to the destroyer, which had been standing by to render aid. All hands survived, save one seacunny, who was seen to reach the bridge as the ship disappeared; in the high sea which was running efforts to reach him before he sank were unsuccessful.

Evidence of the vigilance of our own destroyers and patrol vessels, and of those of our French, Italian, American, and Japanese Allies, continually appears as one's eye traverses the records of merchant steamers during the war. It has been seen in the P. and O. records; it is shown in the incidents just related; it will recur with frequency as this narrative moves towards its close.

A somewhat curious experience was that of the *Australia*, a B. I. ship outward bound via the Cape. At 9.45 p.m. on the 21st of October, 1916, with the Bishop Light bearing fourteen miles abeam, all the ship's navigation lights being extinguished, and her deck lights obscured, the commander observed a green light two and a half points on the port bow, presumed to be that of a sailing craft running free, although no sails could be made out. The *Australia's* navigation lights were therefore switched on, and the ship's course altered in order to bring the other vessel, as prescribed



*By permission of the Admiralty*

ON BOARD A U-BOAT: 1. CAPTURED BRITISH SHIPMASTERS TAKING  
EXERCISE. 2. CLEANING A GUN



by the rule of the road at sea, on the starboard bow, but the green light continued to be visible and to close in. Becoming suspicious, the commander, Captain M. J. Hunt, extinguished his navigation lights, whereupon the strange craft, using a white light and extinguishing the green, began calling up the *Australia* by Morse. But by this time the *Australia's* direction had been changed and the strange light brought astern. The light followed about a mile distant; at 10.15 p.m. the *Australia* fired a warning shot; at 10.30 p.m. she sent out the wireless distress signal, adding that she was being chased by an enemy submarine. An answer was immediately received from the Land's End. At 11 p.m. she picked up the message, "Keep same course, am coming 3 a.m."—so probably did the submarine, for the light disappeared; the *Australia* presently signalled "Chase abandoned," and stood on her prescribed course.

Two months later (20th of December, 1916) the *Itonus*, a British India steamer of 5,340 tons, was torpedoed without warning, and sank within a few minutes, one engineer and four native engine-room hands being drowned. There was barely time to get the boats away, and the commander, Captain T. Costello, after searching the

ship for survivors, scrambled over the stern into the second officer's boat as the vessel settled down for her final plunge. He was ordered into the Austrian submarine as a prisoner of war, and "after four horrible days" was landed on Austrian soil, there to endure the rigours and starvation of a succession of enemy prison camps, until his release at the opening of the armistice between Austria and Italy. The owners got through to him all the parcels of food and clothing they could, and he found such consolation as was possible in the knowledge that, besides the Company's remittances of money to himself in Austria, his dependents at home were being cared for during his captivity.

The plan of the German submarine commander was to catch his victim unawares—to do her fatal injury without warning of any kind. In a smooth sea, with the sharp watch that was kept on all sides, some warning, as has been already seen, was often afforded—sometimes by the wash of a periscope, sometimes by the track of a travelling torpedo; and this was frequently sufficient to insure an attacked ship's safety by a narrow margin. If the torpedo missed, the attack was frequently not renewed, for it was difficult for a



submerged submarine to regain position if her intended quarry possessed respectable speed. Her best chance, having missed with the torpedo, was to emerge and use her guns; but to attack by torpedo she preferred to be within 1,000 yards of her mark, and at that range and for a good deal beyond it a defensively armed ship had a two to one chance of sinking a visible submarine by gun-fire. Consequently abortive torpedo attack against a defensively armed ship was not usually followed up by gun-fire at short range.

In a rough or confused sea it was not easy to discern a periscope, and the track of a torpedo would probably be obscured and remain unobserved until too late. The British India Company's steamship *Mantola* was caught out under such conditions. Zigzagging on a north-westerly course in the open Atlantic, 400 miles west of the Scillies on the 8th of February, 1917, a torpedo struck her abreast of the navigating bridge on the port side. The explosion threw up a huge column of water to a height of forty feet which in its recoil swamped the bridge.

Only one S.O.S. call had been sent out on the ship's main wireless when the gear broke down; on the emergency gear the operator continued to

radiate signals in the hope that within its limited range there might, perchance, be a patrol boat or other friendly armed vessel. Reports from the chief officer and chief engineer showed that No. 2 hold was full of water and the main steampipe probably fractured, for dense steam filled the stokehold, and the engine-room hands, some of them badly scalded, had been driven on deck. Chief Engineer McAlister, before coming up, had reversed the engines; later, when the speed of the ship had abated, he made his way into the engine-room and stopped them.

No vessel was in sight; there was a boisterous easterly wind and a high sea, and the temperature was below freezing-point. With the engines out of action, the ship sinking by the head and liable at any moment to further torpedo attack, Captain D. J. Chivas, the commander, gave orders to lower away the boats, in which the passengers and the allotted members of the crew had already, by his orders, taken their places. The boat-falls were frozen and more or less inflexible, consequently two of the ropes jumped the belaying-pins, with the result that seven native seamen, life-belts in their hands, were thrown into the sea. These poor men, disregarding orders, had neglected to put

on their life-belts before entering the boats, and they sank in the icy water before help could reach them.

All the passengers and the rest of the crew got safely away from the ship, one boat, as usual, standing by to take off the commander and his staff. At 3 p.m. the chief engineer and Marconi operator returned on board. The former made another examination and reported that the main steampipe was intact, but the minor steam-piping badly damaged. He succeeded in re-starting the dynamo so that further calls could be sent out through the main wireless installation. While this was happening the submarine emerged, two and a quarter miles distant to the south-east, and opened fire on the ship. There was no hope of getting up steam again, the boats had drifted a considerable distance away, and the commander reluctantly decided to abandon her. Calling up the chief engineer from the engine-room, he made his way with his companions to the attendant life-boat and pulled clear at 3.30 p.m., the shell-ing meanwhile continuing without intermission. After firing forty rounds with only one hit the submarine closed to within 200 yards and then suddenly dived. The reason of her disappear-

ance became apparent at the same moment. Help was at hand. Those in the boats observed the swift approach of a patrol vessel, which proved to be H.M.S. *Laburnum* carrying the crew of another torpedoed steamer, the *Warley Pickering*. Soon the *Laburnum* was in the midst of the drifting and tossing boats, and the work of rescue began.

When all had been safely transferred Captain Chivas obtained permission from the commander of the patrol vessel to return to the *Mantola*. His call for volunteers was answered not only by his own crew but by men of the *Laburnum* and *Warley Pickering*, too. On board the *Mantola* the water was already up to the boilers; without steam no good could be done by remaining on board during the night, and the party returned to the patrol vessel. Next morning, in a strong wind, with a rough sea still running, the *Laburnum* succeeded in passing a hawser over the stern of the now heavily waterlogged vessel, and attempted to tow her. At half-past eleven the hawser parted. The wind and sea had increased; the torpedoed ship had settled more deeply; the nearest harbour of refuge was close on 200 miles distant, and the plucky attempt had to be

given up. When last seen the *Mantola* was nearly submerged, with seas breaking frequently over her decks fore and aft. Her people were well cared for on board the *Laburnum*, and were landed next day at Bantry, where Deputy-Inspector Cruise, of the Royal Irish Constabulary, placed his whole time and resources at their disposal, and Mr. O'Connor, Lloyd's Agent, came to their aid with advances of money. Their further wants were cared for, as usual, by telegraphic instructions from the British India Company in London.

Another useful ship which fell a victim to the submarine was the *Berbera*, 4,352 tons, homeward bound from India. Forty miles from the entrance to the Straits of Messina, zigzagging on the ordered route, she was, on the 25th of March, 1917, struck by a torpedo—when first seen only a few yards away—which exploded on the starboard side of her No. 2 hatch. The flying bridge was wrecked and at once collapsed, and Cadet Morrish, bridge lookout on the port side, must have been instantly killed, for he was not seen again.

All the usual routine was carried out. Engines were put astern, the whistle blown for boat stations, the position sent out by wireless, and boats ordered away. Damage to several of the

boats or to their gear had rendered them useless. Chief Engineer Cook found all watertight doors closed; but by the time the way was off the ship, she had begun to settle down. As the commander was sinking his secret codes and confidential papers, a second torpedo crossed the bows without doing the ship further harm.

Although No. 1 boat had not been injured, it could not be lowered as the davits were bent and the falls jammed in the damaged blocks. As the gradual sinking of the vessel brought the boat near the water, Chief Officer Gilchrist and Quartermaster French succeeded in launching her. At this point a shot was fired from the ship's gun at the periscope of a submarine a point before the starboard beam; the shell missed by a few feet. Before a second charge could be inserted the submarine had launched a third torpedo, which struck the vessel just forward of the funnel. This torpedo passed under and stove in No. 1 boat, but the occupants, marvellous to relate, escaped injury, and were taken from the sea into No. 2 boat, which was in charge of Cadet Holc.

The vessel was now at her last gasp, and the gun-layer and Cadet Hannay, ordered by the captain to abandon ship, leaped over the stern, the captain

following. All were picked up. The vessel foundered fifteen minutes after the explosion of the third torpedo, her flag being last to disappear.

The submarine then rose to the surface and visited the boats in turn, her commander seeking the *Berbera's* captain, chief officer, and gun-layers; but he did not discover them! The second officer was ordered on board the enemy vessel and sent below as a prisoner, and the boats told to proceed. At 7 p.m. the French destroyers *Fauconneau* and *Carabine* arrived. While they were picking up the boats' parties enemy submarines appeared, but were promptly driven under water by the destroyers' gun-fire. Next morning the survivors were handed over to the care of the French naval authorities at Port Agostoli.

The ship carried twenty-five cadets. Besides Cadet Morrish, two others—Cadets Weeden and Holman—were lost during the launching of the boats. "The entire ship's company," says the captain, "behaved splendidly throughout."

A fight which was rendered peculiarly ghastly by the brutality of the submarine commander was that of the *Umaria*, which encountered a hostile submarine fifteen miles from Sapri on the Italian coast, in the Gulf of Policastro, on

Saturday the 26th of May, 1917. The *Umaria* was a B. I. steamer of 5,300 tons. She was attacked by gun-fire at ten minutes past six in the morning, and an attempt was at once made to reply by means of her 12-pounder. After five rounds the weapon was rendered useless by the breaking of the striker. Her only chance now lay in effective use of her smoke boxes; but the steering-gear was then hopelessly wrecked by a shell, and the ship became unmanageable. In this state, unable to defend herself or even to steer, she drifted. One of the first shells had killed a native seaman, wounding several firemen and two cadets; another shell destroyed a life-boat and killed a saloon topas who was hiding in her. The next man to be hit was Fourth Engineer Warren, whose thigh was broken by a shell splinter.

Distress signals had been sent out, but no reply came. At 7 a.m. it was decided to abandon the ship, and the engineers and their crew were called on deck. Three remaining life-boats got safely away and the gig was lowered, but all this time the submarine continued her shelling without pause, and the *Umaria's* commander, Captain Symmers, received a splinter in the left shoulder. While this was being attended to, the gig, the last



of the boats, was directed to pull out of the line of fire, leaving on board the captain, chief officer, third officer, chief engineer, the ship's clerk, and the wireless operator. In due time a signal was made to those in the gig to return, but when they attempted to obey the submarine fired a round of shrapnel at the boat. The fourth engineer, his thigh already broken, was again hit, a shell splinter piercing his abdomen; Second Engineer Thomson's leg was broken, and he received flesh wounds of the leg and body; Cadet Spauld was wounded in the right arm and right leg; Gunner Quick received several slight body wounds; two natives were also wounded. Only one cadet escaped injury. But in spite of all this those in the gig held on and took the wounded commander and his companions on board. As the gig pulled away a torpedo was fired at the ship, but did no fatal damage. She had eventually to be sunk by gun-fire, and went down at 9.30 the same evening.

Meantime the submarine signalled the gig alongside, and the *Umaria's* captain was ordered to come on board as a prisoner. When the submarine commander heard that the captain had been wounded, he called for the chief engineer. The third engineer—who was already, with Second Officer Walsh

and Cadet Brown, a prisoner in the submarine—was then liberated. The gig, holed by shell splinters, was by this time half full of reddening water, for in such cramped quarters and without appliances little or nothing could be done for the wounded. Continual baling was necessary, and only three men were able to handle an oar. The fourth engineer, after much suffering, died as the gig was pulled away. At 2.15 in the afternoon she fell in with a rowing-boat, manned by Italian coast-guards, who passed a line and towed her to a patrol vessel, alongside which the three life-boats had already arrived. On the way to Sapri in the patrol boat a fireman died of wounds.

At Sapri the wounded received medical aid, and the mayor and townspeople showed kindness and hospitality to all. A few hours later the survivors left by train for Naples, where they were cared for by the Company's agents and supplied with such help in money, clothes, and other things as they needed.

The plucky effort of Captain D. J. Chivas to get the s.s. *Mantola* into Bantry with the help of H.M.S. *Laburnum*, after she had been torpedoed in March, has been described. On the 19th of May, 1917, Captain Chivas, now commanding the

*Karagola*, was once more at sea, outward bound towards Gibraltar. At half-past nine in the morning, Gibraltar being then about 240 miles distant, dense smoke was sighted to the eastward several miles away, and the cause was discovered to be a ship on fire. Fearing the presence of an enemy, the commander altered his course. Soon afterwards a submarine was reported on the starboard beam. Speed was increased, the course altered to bring the submarine astern, and fire opened. Two placers were sufficient, for before a third shot could be fired the submarine had dived. The ship reached Gibraltar without further incident, and went thence to Malta. A fortnight later, on passage from Malta to Port Said, the commander and second officer observed the wake of a periscope about a point before the port beam, distant about 900 yards. Speed was rung on, the submarine was brought astern, and the ship soon passed out of torpedo range. The submarine remained under water, her commander being apparently reluctant to expose his vessel's hull within range of the steamer's gun-fire.

The *Mongara* (Captain G. Hamlyn) was another ship lost. After a narrow escape earlier on that day, she was torpedoed and sunk on the

3rd of July, 1917, while on passage from Port Said to Marseilles. At her first encounter, as she approached the Straits of Messina about nine o'clock in the morning, the wake of an approaching torpedo was sighted. The ship was manœuvred, and the torpedo, which had been fired at long range and was nearly spent, missed her by seventy yards. Steaming away at full speed, and throwing out a smoke screen, the ship was able, by coded wireless, to inform Malta of her escape. At 11 a.m. she was picked up by an Italian destroyer and an armed trawler of the same flag, which took stations ahead and astern of her. Passing Cape d'Armi the signal station ordered the ship into Messina for instructions. Three miles from Messina, doubtless for good reasons, the destroyer steamed off to the port at full speed. Ten minutes later, when the *Mongara* was little more than a mile from the port, a torpedo, first observed at 200 yards on the port beam, struck her, despite efforts to avoid it, just forward of the engine-room. She at once listed to starboard and began to settle down by the stern. Passengers and crew were piped to boat stations. The ship was steered towards the beach; but the starboard engine was disabled, water was rising in the engine-

room, and she appeared to be on the point of sinking. Boats were, therefore, ordered away, the ship was searched and reported clear, and in the eighth minute after the explosion the commander boarded the last boat, carrying two small bags of diplomatic mails which had been confided to his personal care. Two minutes later the vessel sank. On shore, the whole ship's company, passengers and crew, 210 souls in all, answered to the muster roll.

From the Mediterranean the scene now shifts to other seas. The B. I. *Malda* (Captain William Buswell) had her first adventure in the North Sea on the 9th of May, 1916, when an attempt was made to torpedo her. Helm was put hard a-port and the engine-room telegraph moved to "Full speed," with the result that the torpedo was avoided, although it passed close astern. The commander reported that the prompt action of Second Officer Panes and the good lookout kept by Cadet Lewis probably saved the ship. She evaded four further attacks on the 20th of June, 16th of October, 12th of November, each time saved by her gun, and 30th of December, when, a torpedo having missed her, the attack was not continued.

The *Malda* was, unfortunately, not destined

to survive. At 1.40 p.m. on the 25th of August, 1917, in a north-westerly gale, with a high sea running, she was, without warning, torpedoed when at a position about 140 miles west by south of the Scilly Isles. The torpedo broached the ship on the port side, causing flooding of the cross bunker, stokehold, and engine-room, which at once rendered her helpless. The officer of the watch sounded the alarm and stopped the engines. The commander, Captain Charles Davidson, consigned his confidential documents to the sea, the crew went to stations and the engineers and their men were ordered on deck. Calls were sent out on the emergency wireless apparatus and answered. As the ship was brought head to wind in order to assist the handling of the boats the submarine could be seen, conning-tower awash, her periscope stowed, lying on the starboard bow. Fearing a second torpedo, the commander gave orders to abandon the ship, directing the boats, if possible, to keep together under her lee.

An hour later the submarine fully emerged and headed towards the boats, attempting in her passage to run down that of the chief engineer, which was some distance from the others. A machine gun was trained, from a small door in the

base of the conning-tower, on the chief officer's boat, while the submarine commander vainly endeavoured by megaphone to make himself heard above the noise of the gale, and his crew mocked the unfortunates in the boat with cameras. The submarine then moved off to windward where lay other boats, and soon afterwards steered to the west and disappeared from view.

The captain, who, in his gig, had been last away from the ship, hung on to leeward for some time, hoping a patrol vessel might appear; but as his boat was overladen, and it was impossible in the weather prevailing to heave-to, he set sail at 4 p.m. and stood on through the night towards the Scillies. On Sunday morning he fell in with an east-bound convoy and was picked up and taken to Milford Haven.

To return to the ship: towards six o'clock on Saturday, seeing she still floated, the chief officer, Mr. S. Slightham, cruised about in an attempt to pick up the remaining boats, which had by this time scattered before the high wind and seas. Darkness was approaching, and all he could do was to regain the lee of the ship and put out a sea anchor in the hope of boarding her next day and reporting by wireless. At this moment the

submarine reappeared. Thereupon the chief officer hoisted sail and stood away some distance to the east, presently putting out his drag again so that his boat might ride head to sea until morning. A night of cold weather, heavy rain squalls, and ineffective burning of flares, gave place to dawn and disappointment—the *Malda* had disappeared.

Sailing well, and making good weather of it, the chief officer ran eastwards all day on Sunday, the sea remaining high but the wind gradually falling. At 11 a.m. the following day, when he estimated the islands to be distant twenty miles, H.M. Trawler *Hercules IV.* was sighted ahead, looking, as was afterwards learned, for the *Malda's* boats. The warmth of the trawler's engine-room for the native survivors, of the mess-room for the Europeans, and dry clothing for all, were doubtless welcome enough after the ordeal through which they had passed. In the evening they were carried safely into St. Mary's. The other boats all made good arrivals. But four native firemen lost their lives by the explosion, and one native in the chief officer's boat died from exposure. The *Malda* was a new vessel of 8,000 tons gross register.

A more fortunate ship was the *Orna* (Captain



William Buswell), which, several months later, on the night of the 19th of October, 1917 (8.55 p.m.), sighted a submarine about three points on the starboard bow at a distance of about 1,000 yards. The helm was promptly put hard a-port, and a torpedo fired by the submarine passed ahead of the ship; as no other succeeded it, it is probable that this was the last on board. The submarine then appeared on the ship's port bow, and consequently out of the radius of her gun. As two rounds of shell, fired in quick succession, passed harmlessly over her bridge, the *Orna* was driven at the enemy in an attempt to ram, but missed.

Again the submarine appeared, this time on the port beam, still safe from the liner's gun, and fired two more rounds, which also missed the ship. Meantime the *Orna* was manœuvred for a second attempt to ram. This also proved unsuccessful, but brought the *Orna's* gun to bear, the submarine being now astern. Two rounds at comparatively short range caused the enemy to submerge, nor did he attempt to renew the fight. It should be added that the commander of the *Orna* in his attempts to ram had extreme difficulty, owing to the phosphorescence of the sea, in locating the submarine.

Captain Buswell, Third Officer David Douglas Cowieson, and Apprentice G. Younger were mentioned in the *London Gazette* for this plucky fight, and granted certificates of commendation. Seaman Benjamin Evans, R.N.V.R., was also mentioned. The Ministry of Shipping made a grant of money to the commander and of half a month's wages to the officers, including the wireless operator and the European and native crew. In reckoning the awards, the "wages" of cadets, who receive during their period of instruction a nominal rate of pay, were "assumed" at £10 a month. The Shipping Controller, Sir Joseph Maclay, conveyed to all concerned his appreciation of the gallantry and good seamanship displayed. For "the skilful and gallant manner in which the captain handled his vessel on the occasion," Lloyd's awarded him their silver medal; and a further grant was added as an honorary acknowledgment of the service of captain, officers, and crew.

The case of the *Sealda* (Captain Sinclair) was rather similar to that of the P. and O. s.s. *Palma*. On the afternoon of the 16th of October, 1917, as the *Sealda* was steaming in convoy, a periscope was sighted on her starboard beam. One torpedo was fired at her bow, and another at her midship section.



U S S ' O L I V E B A S A ' , T H E G U N



Turning his ship to starboard, Captain Sinclair managed to pass between them, the one crossing his ship's bow, the other passing very close along her starboard side without contact. An alarm was given, and the convoy began to scatter. The submarine then emerged astern, almost within point-blank range of the *Sealda's* gun; this was a rare chance, but unluckily another vessel of the convoy lay close up in the line of fire, and before the situation had cleared the submarine had dived again.

Two days later two submarines were sighted, one on the starboard, the other on the port quarter. To the astonishment of those on the bridge of the *Sealda* three torpedoes could be seen, all, however, going wide of the ship. The commander opened fire on the submarine which lay on the starboard hand, and scored a hit with his fourth shot; he then directed a series of shots at the other submarine, which after the fourth round submerged. "The behaviour of the crew," says Captain Sinclair, "was highly satisfactory."

On the morning of the 8th of December, 1917, the British India Company's steamer *Chyebassa* (Captain Logan), when twenty miles distant from Malta, was, notwithstanding a vigilant watch, attacked by a submerged enemy which, without

warning, discharged a torpedo. It reached the ship, and the explosion caused a huge breach in her hull. The position was recognised to be one of extreme danger, and the majority of the crew were at once ordered away in the life-boats.

The official report to the British Admiral of Patrols, Mediterranean, records the subsequent events:

“ I have the honour to bring to your notice the good discipline and seamanship displayed on board s.s. *Chyebassa* when that ship was torpedoed on the 8th of December.

“ The boats were got away in a very short time, and were already clear and lying off the ship by the time I reached her, some ten minutes after the explosion. The master and a group of officers and men were still on her bridge, and the gun's crew were still standing by their gun.

“ I was about to pick up some of the boats when the master hailed them to return, which order was carried out, and the boats re-hoisted clear of the water with the greatest smartness.

“ The master then got his ship under way the very instant the boats were clear of the water, and steamed her into Mersa Scirocco, a distance of about twenty miles, the visible portion of his crew remaining fallen in abreast the boats in a most orderly manner.

“ No signs of panic or even excitement were visible at any time, and I submit that great credit is due to the master and officers and crew generally,

more especially those of the engine-room complement, who returned to their duties below and steamed the ship into shallow water, although they could not tell but that she would go down at any moment."

The Admiral Superintendent, in transmitting for the information of the *Chyebassa's* commander and owners an appreciatory minute from the Commander-in-Chief at Malta, added: "The conduct of the master, the officers, and crew of the s.s. *Chyebassa* was in accordance with the best traditions of the British Mercantile Marine."

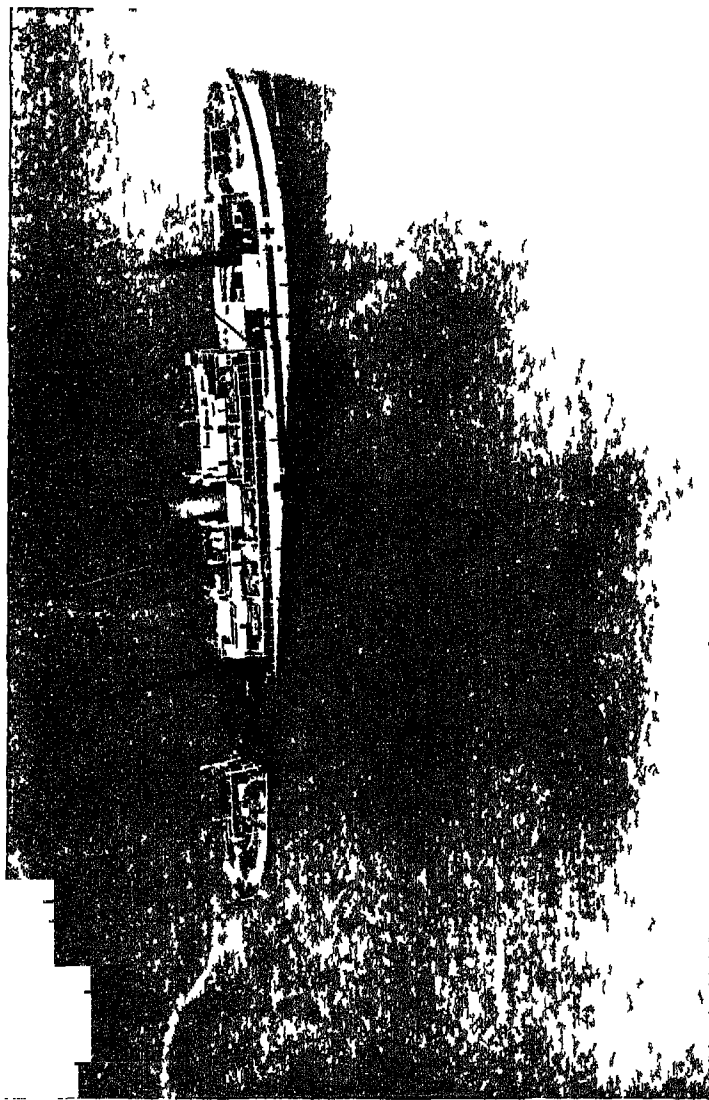
The torpedoing of the B. I. Company's s.s. *Rewa*, a hospital ship, has been referred to in previous chapters. From her bridge, near midnight, on the 4th of January, 1918, when the ship was at the entrance to the Bristol Channel, a few miles south-west of Lundy Island, a small white light was sighted on the port bow. Concluding the light was carried by a sailing craft, the commander, Captain J. E. Drake, altered his course to give her a wide berth. Three minutes later a violent explosion occurred on the port side of the *Rewa* abreast of the funnel, blowing two life-boats to pieces, and killing four of the engine-room native crew. The ship started to settle at once, and an hour later had gone. Meantime boats were

manned and patients transferred to them. Many of the patients were cot cases, many others had not the free use of their arms, and the task was one of more than ordinary difficulty and delicacy; but every soul was taken safely off the ship. Fortunately two trawlers were soon upon the scene together with the s.s. *Paul Paix*,\* everybody was picked up, and all were landed next morning at Swansea. The captain's report that it was impossible to speak too highly of the work of the officers, engineers, and medical staff in this emergency was amply confirmed by the event. But the ship was palpably a hospital ship, and the Geneva Convention apart, should, by all the commonest dictates of humanity, have been immune from attack.

How valuable in these times were the eyes of youth in keeping a sharp lookout and quickly spotting indications of danger was shown in the earliest encounter of the B. I. Company's *Waipara* with a submarine. It was at night, the sea was phosphorescent, and visually to pick up a periscope under such conditions had more than once been proved to be almost impossible. But there were even in such circumstances other signs to be looked for. Cadet A. S. Currie in the crow's-nest

\* The *Paul Paix* survived three submarine attacks.





HOW GERMAN OBSERVED THE GENEVA CONVENTION.

*THE NEW YORK TIMES*



and Cadet R. J. Mathews, starboard bridgeloout, were quick to give warning as they saw a wake of bubbles approaching the starboard side of the vessel. That the warning saved the ship there can be little doubt, for instant movement of the helm established the few marginal feet between the bow and the course of the torpedo which were needed to avert disaster.

On the 19th of March, 1918, the *Waipara* entered upon a voyage which contained three minutes of intense excitement. As the ship was proceeding in convoy at a reduced speed in fine, clear weather with a slight sea and swell, smudges of smoke were (7.20 a.m.) noticed ahead; these developed into three British and three American destroyers. An hour later a four-funnelled American destroyer rounded the stern of the escort, H.M.A.M. Cruiser *Montagna*, from port to starboard, evidently with the idea of hailing her and issuing convoy orders. When slightly abaft the *Montagna's* beam, the destroyer's magazine blew up with a loud explosion, débris and shells being thrown to a great height and falling all around the *Waipara* and another vessel—the *Abonema*—which was on a parallel course to port. On the smoke clearing, the *Montagna* was observed

to be on fire, her stern plating around the poop appearing to be blown outwards. Captain Steadman of the *Waipara* at once diagnosed submarine attack, ordered action stations, and had his gun trained in the direction of the smoke, abeam on the port side; the *Waipara's* helm was put hard a-port, the engines rung on full speed, and a wide zigzag course commenced. As the ship came round, within a minute of the initial explosions, her gun was accidentally discharged, the shot striking the *Abonema* and blowing a hole two feet square in her bridge deck, whereupon the helm of the latter ship was starboarded and her boats released ready for lowering. A third minute was sufficient to establish the facts; and the convoy, which had been thrown into some disorder, received directions to re-form and proceed. The *Montagna* when last seen by the *Waipara* was slowly making for the English coast escorted by destroyers. The sighting and destruction of a mine on the 20th, and on the 21st the administering of depth charges by the escort to a runaway submarine, were further incidents of this voyage.

On the 4th of August, 1918, the *Waipara*, in ballast, was crossing from Havre to Southampton, At 1.20 p.m., as Captain Steadman was engaged

in taking a cast of the patent lead immediately below the bridge to starboard, with Cadet Haigh and a quartermaster assisting, the alarm was shouted, "Torpedo on the starboard beam." The third officer ordered the helm hard a-starboard; the captain sprang to the bridge, which he had left but a moment before, the quartermaster jumped forward, and the cadet aft. But before the captain could regain the bridge, the torpedo exploded. Cadet Haigh was thrown many feet in the air and killed instantly by his fall on deck. The engines were kept going at full speed until the vessel was listing twenty-three degrees, when they were stopped; No. 3 hold had filled to the orlop deck with incoming water; water was rising in the engine-room; and by the time the way was off the ship the fires were out. Orders were given to abandon the engine-room and lower away the boats. The chief officer, Mr. Davis, the fourth officer, Mr. Carr, the chief engineer, Mr. Martin, Third Engineer Duffy and Fireman Knight, stayed on board with the commander. The rest of the crew were taken into the patrol boat, to which also was transferred the body of Cadet Haigh.

The ship was badly damaged, but it was considered that she would keep afloat, and the

commander's call for volunteers was answered by Second Officer Vines, Cadets Carr, Swift, Kelly, Tailor, Driver, Holland, and Maitherson, and Ordinary Seaman Hughes. By 7.45 p.m. four tugs had arrived, hand steering gear had been connected up, and the ship was slowly moving in the direction of the Isle of Wight, with two of the cadets stationed in charge of the gun. During the night fifteen hawsers, wires or ropes, parted, and as it took four cadets to steer and two to pass orders, the remaining eight members of the crew were kept hard at work with the towing-gear until 10 o'clock next morning, when the *Waipara* was brought into Southampton Water and anchored off Netley preparatory to being docked and repaired.

Perhaps the heavy cares of the British seamen in war were never so simply nor so effectively presented as in the almost biblical periods of Captain Kinnear of the British India Company's steamship *Umta*.

"I beg to report," he writes, "that the s.s. *Umta* left Naples for Bizerta at 5 p.m. on the 14th of March, 1918, in convoy with five other vessels, and escorted by two trawlers and a cruiser of the Italian navy.

"At 9.50 p.m. G.M.T. on the same night, when the weather was dark, fine, and hazy, with a moderate

breeze and a moderate sea, and vessel was proceeding south (true) at a speed of nine knots, the third officer, Mr. J. Coleman, observed the track of a torpedo about 100 feet from the vessel, immediately before she was struck.

"Although we had one lookout on forecastle, one on bridge, and one aft by the gun, and also the gunner on watch and the third officer and myself on the bridge, yet we had no indication that submarines were near until the vessel was actually torpedoed.

"The torpedo came from a direction about four points on the port quarter, and struck the vessel fair on the bulkhead dividing the stokehold from the bunker, and about two strakes of plating above the bilge-keel.

"A hole was made in the ship's port side about thirty-one feet by twenty-two feet, and another hole was made on the starboard side about a foot in diameter, and also in the same position with respect to the port side.

"There was a great escape of steam, and one boat was found to be completely destroyed and another damaged; and the wireless installation was put out of action.

"Orders were given for the crew to get into the remaining boats and row to a safe distance after the ship had lost her way through the water, as it was not certain whether the bulkheads would hold or that the ship might not be torpedoed a second time.

"In proceeding to the boats the cadet, Mr. Wood, and several of the crew fell down a bunker hatch which had been blown up by the explosion; but

they apparently all got up again by their own efforts and the assistance of the chief engineer.

"Of two boats on the weather (starboard) side, one, having its complement on board, was damaged against the ship's side and became water-logged, and occupants had to climb into the next boat: several of them climbed on a raft which was thrown over near them.

"One Goanese boy says he saw Cadet Wood swimming for the raft without a life-belt on, and that he was unable to reach it.

"The crew made for the escorting trawler and got on board, and the third officer, fourth engineer, and the clerk remained on board the s.s. *Umta* with me to watch events, as they could swim well and also handle the gun.

"About an hour after being torpedoed I heard the wash of a submarine passing ahead, and warned those left with me to keep a lookout aft.

"A few minutes after this the gun's crew reported a submarine periscope passing, but too close to one of our ship's boats, which was not far from the stern, so that it could not be fired at.

"A search was made around the ship and in the engine-room and bunkers for any wounded that might have been left behind, but no others could be found; and before morning we were certain the bulkheads were holding and the crew could be taken back on board.

"When the vessel was torpedoed the rest of the convoy passed on, accompanied by one trawler, the cruiser and one trawler standing by us, but at too great a distance to be hailed.

\* \* \* \* \*



“About 1 p.m. on the 15th the Italian destroyer *Schiaffino* was passing, and I hoisted the signal ‘Telegraph Admiralty want immediate assistance,’ and they answered that assistance was coming; and later an officer came on board and said that if the tow-boat did not arrive before dark he himself would take us in tow.

“The tug-boat *Bruno* arrived at 6 p.m. and took us in tow, but was unable to get past Ponza Island, so we anchored to leeward of it.

“We remained at anchor there until 6 p.m. on the 16th of March, and then the destroyer *Partinope* took us in tow; but three 18-fathom lengths of new cable with patent anchor had to be slipped, as we were unable to heave it up, owing to the steam-pipes from the donkey boiler being severed in the engine-room. The anchor and cable was well buoyed up with painted oil-barrel, with the ship’s name, secured by rope and wire to the end of the chain, and the Italian authorities promised to recover same.

“The s.s. *Umta* arrived in Naples at noon on the 17th of March, and next morning was placed in dry dock.

“A rough report on the damage was obtained as soon as vessel was dry, and the same telegraphed that day.

“On mustering the crew at Naples, Mr. Wood, cadet, and seven natives were found to be missing, but the bodies of two firemen were discovered in the boiler-room when dry docked. The names and addresses will follow.

“The cargo as far as can be ascertained has not

been damaged, of which we had 2,500 tons measurement, and 750 tons weight, from Genoa for Alexandria."

As an expression of their appreciation of the gallant conduct of Captain Kinnear on this occasion, the Committee of Lloyd's awarded him Lloyd's silver medal and a sum of £50; to Third Officer J. P. Coleman and Fourth Engineer J. MacDougal, £20 each; to the clerk, E. de Mars, £10.

Just after noon on Friday, the 22nd of March, 1918, an enemy submarine on the port beam was sighted by Moosa Mahomed, lookout man aft, and Ally Mahomed, the lookout man on the main-mast of H.M.T. *Chupra* (B. I. S. N. Company), Captain C. R. King. As the main-mast lookout sounded the danger signal, the submarine, which carried one large gun and a smaller gun, opened rapid fire with both, shells falling well ahead of the transport. The signal for special full speed was instantly responded to, the S.O.S. sent out, and fire opened on the enemy. Twenty minutes later, while smoke boxes were being got ready, the submarine's larger gun was put out of action by a well-directed shot from the *Chupra*. Shot from the submarine's smaller piece fell short, and the shelling ceased five minutes later, when the

enemy had in all aimed forty rounds. One shell struck the *Chupra*, made a large hole in her bridge, splintering the woodwork of the engine-room telegraph, then buried itself in the starboard side of No. 2 hatch, and on its way damaged four deck plates and smashed two steampipes. No one was hurt; the officers and crew, European and native, in the engine-room and on deck, worked coolly and well, and the ship escaped.

On the 23rd of March, 1918, at 5 p.m., on passage in convoy through the Mediterranean, the British India Company's s.s. *Morvada* (Captain George Irwin) was attacked by an enemy submarine, which discharged a torpedo from two points abaft the starboard beam. The helm was put hard a-starboard, engines rung on full speed, and fire opened by the starboard howitzer on the oncoming torpedo; its course was deflected by the *Morvada's* projectile, and it missed the ship by a few yards. The commodore signalled his congratulations on the handling of the ship, and the convoy passed on.

The *Nirpura* (B. I.), armed with two 7·5-inch howitzers for the dropping of depth charges, was one of fifteen ships in convoy which left Gibraltar homeward bound on the 14th of April, 1918; two days later, at 8.9 p.m., when off the coast of Portugal,

about 120 miles west of Lisbon, she was struck on the starboard side abreast of the main-mast by a torpedo. Despite a vigilant watch in every direction, no submarine had been discerned. The shock of the explosion put the starboard howitzer out of action, so that a retaliatory depth charge, which might have been dropped at a venture, was made impossible. Three hours later, at 11 p.m., the ship sank by the stern. One hundred and three survivors were landed at Lisbon by the attendant patrol gun-boat; four men of the native crew had been killed by the explosion.

It has been observed earlier in these records that all the customary precautions against perils of the sea were transformed by the action of Germany into dangers as great as those which they were designed to avoid. This became partly true of some of the measures taken against the submarine itself. Sailing in convoy without lights and zig-zagging about 4.30 a.m. on the 18th of April, 1918, the *Itria* was rammed in the engine-room by a steamer in company, which in the darkness had suddenly ported to avoid another vessel. The wells were sounded; but while the *Itria* was making water but slowly in Nos. 4 and 5 holds, the engine and boiler-rooms were full, water

covering the cylinder-tops. The colliding vessel was so badly damaged that she was unable to give any help. Two hours later orders were received by the *Itria* from the escort to abandon ship. The commander of the escort then decided to attempt to tow her to Malta. In the hours that followed she had twice to be abandoned, and finally sank, a few minutes after the few remaining officers and men had been taken off, at 6.10 p.m. By the collision, Mr. R. C. Barr, second engineer, and one native fireman were killed in the engine-room. The *Itria's* surviving crew, commander, and officers were landed two days later at Malta, where after a stay of close on three weeks they were transferred to another B. I. steamer for passage to India. In this vessel, the *Itinda*, they suffered another catastrophe, for she was torpedoed.

The *Itinda* (Captain D. F. James) carrying in all 142 souls, bore also a general cargo and, in the 'tween decks of No. 5 hold, twenty tons of high-explosive shell. The torpedo (the 10th of May, 1918, 1.4 p.m. ship's time) was sighted by the third officer when close aboard and too late for any action to be taken. It landed by ill fate in No. 5 hold among the high-explosive shell, and the firing of these with the bursting of the torpedo

caused a terrific explosion. No. 5 beam and hatches and the after boat on the port side were blown away, the wireless acrials were destroyed, débris fell as far forward as the bridge and fore deck, and the gun, aft on the poop, was lifted from its pedestal, settling breech downwards on its platform. The third officer by standing order stopped the engines; the engine-room staff remained at their posts.

The ship was far from the land and in deep water. The case appeared to be hopeless, and the commander gave orders to ring off the engines and call the engine-room staff on deck. All on board, save the chief officer, second engineer, and commander, were ordered to the boats, which were lowered to within six feet of the water, steadied until the way was off the ship, and then sent away, pulling for the escort. The second officer in charge of the remaining boat was ordered to stand by to pick up the commander, chief officer, and second engineer. Towards 1.25 p.m. the ship began listing to starboard and settling further by the stern. Fire had broken out aft, and as the commander was not certain that all the ammunition had exploded, he told the chief officer and second engineer to make for the boat. After a final look round to

see that no one remained on board, he himself left the ship at 1.30 p.m. Quantities of water were pouring out from the starboard side opposite to which the torpedo had entered; apparently the ship had been holed right through.

The escort remained circling round the *Itinda*, which was now heavily on fire aft; at 5.50 p.m. she began to settle more quickly, the submersion of her stern gradually quenching the flames. At 6.5 p.m. her forward end rose to an almost perpendicular position as she sank stern first.

The master on board the escort accounted for all hands except a bhandary of the *Itria*, who had been last seen immediately before the explosion washing clothes on No. 5 hatch.

The *Upada* was another ship of the same class as the *Umta*, but in spite of repeated damage by the enemy she too survived the war. On the 25th of April, 1918, she left Marseilles at 7.30 a.m., in an escorted convoy, bound for Bizerta, *en route* for Calcutta. Two days later, in a position about 100 miles to the west of Antioeo Island, Sardinia, the convoy was attacked by an enemy submarine, and a torpedo penetrated the *Upada's* No. 1 hold on the starboard side, breaching her extensively, and hurling aloft the hatches and

derricks. The crew went to stations in life-belts, and stood by pending a report from the chief officer and carpenter. No. 1 hold had filled with water, putting the ship considerably down by the head; but the bulkhead aft of the damage, although slightly injured, held well, and immediate steps were taken to shore it up with timber on its after side and to plug with wood several bolt-holes from which the rivets had been driven by the explosion. An attempt was made to cover the breach in the hull with weighted tarpaulins kept ready for the purpose, but the weather was so rough that this could not be done. Nos. 2 and 3 ballast tanks were then pumped out, thus raising the ship's bow and partly immersing the propeller, and she was got under way for the Sardinian coast. A jib was set, for the ship was steering badly, but this was only partly effective. Two of the French patrol boats stood by, and throughout the night the gun's crew remained at their station. At the close of next day she was met off Carlo Forte and taken into harbour by the Admiralty salvage tug *Dalkeith*. The *Dalkeith* had previously brought in another torpedoed vessel, the *Kingstonian*, and it was designed to conduct both ships to Cagliari; but in the early



hours of the 28th an enemy submarine stole into the harbour, torpedoed the *Kingstonian* again, afterwards shelling her, and sank the salvage tug. The *Upada* escaped further damage, and reached Cagliari safely; there she was repaired by the British Admiralty authorities, and sailed on July 10th for Bizerta.

Eleven days later, on passage from Bizerta to Marseilles, when midway between the Balearic Isles and Sardinia, she was again attacked. A first torpedo passed ahead but was immediately followed by a second, which struck her, again in No. 1 lower hold, but this time on the port side. The explosion caused great damage to the hull, wrecked the 'tween decks, and killed three native seamen. The *Upada's* gun was brought into action, but before it could be ranged the submarine had dived. She was followed by depth charges from the trawler escort, probably without effect, for next morning at half-past five a torpedo, approaching on the starboard side, was sighted by Fourth Engineer Kilgannon, who immediately rushed to the bridge and threw the helm over, so that the ship's head paid off to port and the torpedo missed her by a few yards. She reached Marseilles next day, and was docked for further repairs. The

commander in a written memorandum modestly expresses the opinion that the staunchness of the bulkhead was, on both occasions, the means of saving the ship and enabling him to float her safely to port.

The total ignorance of Queensberry rules, and the brutal common sense of German mentality, were well exemplified in the case of the *Matiana*, which on the 1st of May, 1918, fifteen minutes after midnight, while keeping station in convoy, grounded on the Keith Reef. The wells showed ten feet of water in No. 1 hold, which quickly increased to fifteen feet; the bulkhead aft of No. 1 was intact and the remainder of the vessel dry. Attempts to tow her off were unsuccessful. Soundings round the ship showed she was aground forward in fifteen feet of water. At 11.10 a.m. the track of a torpedo was sighted four points on the starboard bow; the ship's gun was fired at it, but missed. The torpedo reached the vessel at the break of the forecastle head, causing further extensive under-water damage, and practically sealing her fate. Daily attempts were made to tow her off, lightening operations continuing all the time. On the 5th of May came a fatal change of weather, for the wind veered to the south-east

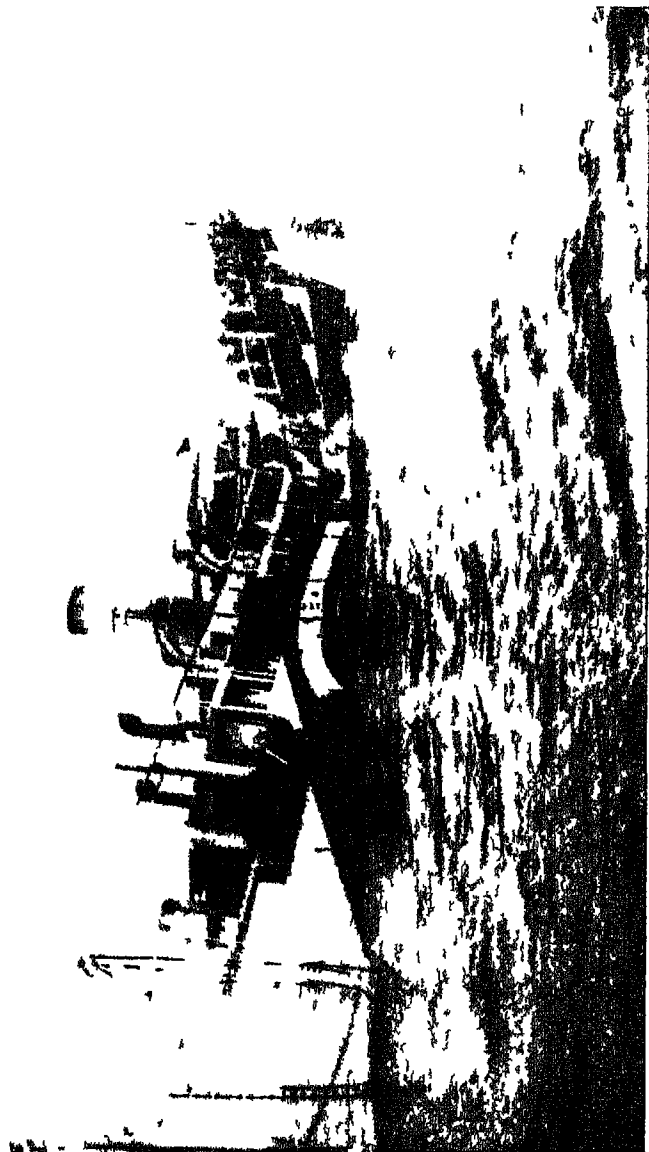
and increased in force with a heavy sea, which swung the ship to port. A final attempt to extricate her, in the course of which one of the salvage craft was wrecked on the reef, proved unavailing. During the afternoon she began to bump heavily, and the main deck at the bridge showed signs of buckling. At 4 p.m. she commenced to break up, and the commander decided to abandon her. All hands were transferred to the patrol boats, and taken to Bizerta. Two days later the ship had broken her back, only the poop remaining above water.

The danger from torpedoes was, as already noted, much greater than the danger from mines, but in some cases, as has already been seen, mines proved disastrous.

An instance occurred in the case of the *Shirala*. She left London on Sunday the 30th of June, 1918, and steamed to Higham Bight, where she added to her general cargo a consignment of munitions of war, and embarked her passengers. The following day, shortly after noon, she dropped down stream to the Nore, where she anchored for the night. On Tuesday morning at daybreak, she proceeded. Aircraft and naval vessels were met in quick succession throughout

the day. At 5.12 p.m., in the hazy calm of a summer afternoon, a muffled explosion and a sudden upheaval beneath the ship's port bilge told her commander, Captain E. G. Murray Dickinson, that she had chanced upon an enemy mine; a few seconds later a second mine, probably "bridled" with the first, exploded on the starboard side. The wireless aeriels were destroyed, the main steampipe carried away, and the engines thus put out of action. The vessel lost her way quickly, boats were lowered, and all surviving hands got away, except the commander and one or two of the ship's people whom he directed to stand by. Second Engineer Malcolm Wright, who was on watch in the engine-room, was killed by the explosion, together with four natives of the engine-room crew. Extra-Fifth Engineer Shaw, who was on the engine-room starting platform as junior watch-keeper, managed to make his way, half-blinded by escaping steam, through the wreckage to the deck above.

Only three minutes after the mines had exploded an airship was sighted, and bore down upon the ship; ten minutes later three "P" boats and a mine-sweeper arrived on the scene and picked up the survivors from their boats. After a further



SAILING OF THE 'HIRALA' (B I COMPANY) (See page 217)



interval of seventeen minutes, at 5.42 p.m., the commander and his companions left the ship and went on board P-boat No. 36.

Meantime the *Shirala*, with her midship plating torn and her engine-room and stokehold waterlogged, was literally sinking amidships, her still buoyant bow and stern supporting the dead weight of her bending middle fabric; and her extremities, working about the two centres of buoyancy thus created, were gradually forced upwards until her forefoot and propeller emerged from the sea, to the level of which her crumpled boat deck had at that stage been depressed. In this position she gradually filled and sank.

Three unsuccessful attacks by submarines were reported from British India ships during October, the last month before the Armistice. The first was from the *Chindwara* (Captain D. McGregor Macdonald). At 1.45 a.m. on the 2nd of October, 1918, a torpedo was seen by the second officer, Mr. J. B. Purnell, and Cadet B. W. Quidling; helm was immediately put hard-a-starboard, and the torpedo barely cleared the stern. The ship was navigated away from the submarine at full speed on a zigzag course. Four hours later a submarine was sighted by Chief Officer A. O.

Farrett and Gunner J. Scott on the starboard beam, a shell at the same moment falling close alongside, followed by five or six more, but none found the target. Zigzagging at full speed the ship replied with her stern 4.7 gun. The submarine submerged.

The *Nevasa* (Captain W. H. Walton), a B. I. passenger steamer of 9,071 tons gross, had been attacked by gun-fire from a submarine in the Atlantic on the 6th of July, but by skilful handling of her own weapon had managed to drive off the enemy. On a voyage from Glasgow to New York, 2nd of October, 1918, when close to the American coast, she was attacked by a submarine of a new type, mounting large guns in barbettes, and with a surface speed of twelve or thirteen knots. Luckily this formidable enemy was sighted in good time, her shots fell short, and the *Nevasa's* superior speed soon placed her beyond the reach of harm.

The last loss sustained by the B. I. Company occurred only eight days before the end of the fighting on the western front. The *Surada* was one of a convoy of vessels which left Port Said homeward bound on the 2nd of November, 1918. At 1.45 p.m., when the ship had been about three



hours under way, the third ship of the line was torpedoed, as usual without warning. The convoy was at once ordered to return to port. While the change of direction was being carried out a second vessel was struck. At 3.25 p.m. a third ship, the *Surada*, was hit. She immediately began to settle by the stern, listing heavily to port at the same time. Two boats had been demolished by the explosion, but the remainder were lowered, all hands getting clear away except the commander and a few officers and men whom he retained on board. The inrush of water appearing to have ceased, a hawser was passed to an attendant tug. Towing continued until ten minutes to seven, when the torpedoed vessel suddenly went over on her beam ends, sinking in about forty feet of water. As she capsized the commander and the remaining officers and men jumped overboard and were picked up by trawlers. Fortunately there was no loss of life.

Rough weather prevailed for some days. By the time it became possible to examine the vessel she had settled in the sand, and her funnel had fallen over and disappeared. Only her upper bridge was above water, and the salvage authorities pronounced her recovery to be hopeless.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SUBMARINE WAR—IV. THE HAIN AND MERCANTILE COMPANIES

As has been previously mentioned, the Hain and Mercantile Steamship Companies, especially the latter, suffered heavy losses in the submarine war. The odds were always against these ships, but whenever possible they stood up to the enemy or put up a flying fight, and sometimes they won.

The Hain boats are distinguished by the "Tre" of their county as a prefix, their chief home port being St. Ives, Cornwall.

The *Treneglos*, the first Hain steamer to be lost from that cause, was torpedoed by an unseen submarine at noon on the 14th of November, 1915, close to the Cretan coast, while on a voyage from Mauritius to Falmouth. The third engineer and two firemen were killed. The remainder of the crew landed at Grabusa Bay, Crete, at 4 p.m. With a native guide the survivors crossed the

mountains by a goat path, and at midnight found refuge and shelter at the coast town of Castillo.

While bringing a cargo of grain from Karachi to London the *Tremanton* was sunk 200 miles from land on the 20th of January, 1916, after two and a half hours' shell-fire by an enemy submarine, in lat. 35.24 N., long. 18.9 E. The *Trematon* was not armed, and the master at the opening of the attack stopped the vessel and ordered the crew into the boats. They were picked up next day by H.M. Destroyer *Rifleman* and taken to Malta.

On the 13th of March, 1917, the *Trecarne* from Barry for Port Said, when ninety miles from the Scilly Isles, was approached by an enemy submarine. The *Trecarne* had a gun, which was promptly brought into action at short range, and the submarine hurriedly submerged. In the Mediterranean she again encountered a submarine, whose commander, probably because he sighted her defensive armament, allowed her to pass unmolested.

The *Trewyn*, with a cargo of ore from Algiers to Middlesbrough, left Gibraltar on the 24th of March, 1916, and was never heard of again. A week later the steamship *Governor* passed a life-

buoy, bearing the name "Trewyn—St. Ives," and some awning spars. Swift and complete disaster must have overtaken the steamer, and it is probable that the total disappearance of the ship's company was the result of the method of sinking "without trace" for which German submarine commanders were to become infamous.

On the night of the 22nd-23rd of April, 1916, the *Tregantle*, bound from Galveston to Hull with a cargo of maize, was off the Norfolk coast. Her pilot was unable, through thick weather, to pick up the light, and she was brought to an anchor at 9 p.m. Two hours later she was in a sinking condition, her hull having been shattered, whether by the explosion of a torpedo or through contact with a floating mine was not ascertained. Blasts of her steam-whistle quickly brought patrol boats and motor boats from the shore, the master and his crew meantime taking to their boats. By the time the crew had boarded a Lowestoft tug their vessel had disappeared.

On the 27th of January, 1916, the *Trewellard*, on passage from Alexandria, fell in with a two-gun enemy submarine of improved type. Full speed was rung on, and aided by a strong following breeze the *Trewellard*, after a forty minutes' chase,

managed to show the enemy a clean pair of heels. The Hain steamer had on board a general officer, with orderlies, and a unit of the Royal Army Service Corps. She carried a gun.

The *Trevarrack*, from Buenos Ayres, arrived in the English Channel on the 16th of November, 1916, bound to Hull for orders. At daybreak the chief officer sighted the conning-tower of a submarine on the port beam three miles away. Full speed was immediately ordered, but the submarine, firing as she came, began to close in. The vessel, which was unarmed, had been already several times hit. The appearance of a second submarine, rapidly overhauling, left the master no alternative but to abandon ship. The submarines continued to shell the *Trevarrack*, which sank at the twenty-eighth shot. The crew were picked up by the smack *Peto* and landed at Brixham next day.

The *Trevean*, bound from Benisaf to Tyne Dock with a cargo of iron ore, was sunk by shell-fire from an enemy submarine 240 miles south-west of the Fastnet Light on the 22nd of January, 1917. The master and two gunners were taken prisoners. Picked up from their boats by a passing steamer, the rest of the ship's people were landed at Gibraltar.

On the morning of the 18th of March, 1917, the

*Trevose* was torpedoed and sunk by an enemy submarine, two firemen being killed. The crew were picked up the following evening by the *Alnwick Castle*, but the *Alnwick Castle* was herself sunk next morning, when both crews were transferred to her boats. Two of these boats disappeared, and were never heard of again. With them went the master of the *Trevose* and two of his crew. Three of the boats fell in with passing vessels and were rescued. For seven days those in a fourth boat struggled to reach the land. Their daily food consisted of two biscuits a man; some lost their toes from frost-bite; five men of the *Alnwick Castle* died in the boat. On the seventh day she made the port of Ferrol.

With the approach of evening on the 7th of April, 1917, the *Trefusis*, then off the Sardinian coast, was hit by the first shot from a submarine, which manœuvred to keep between her quarry and the setting sun. The Hain steamer's gun fired eight rounds, but was all the time outranged, and, with the submarine scoring hit after hit, there was nothing to do but abandon the ship. The master, chief officer, and chief engineer were taken prisoners of war. The rest of the crew escaped in the ship's boats.

## THE U 35.

On the 18th of April, 1917, the *Trekieve*, then on passage from Cardiff, under sealed orders, with a cargo of coal, was torpedoed and sunk in the open sea 100 miles west of Gibraltar. An apprentice and two firemen were killed by the explosion. The remainder of the crew, save the master, got away in their boats, and were picked up by the s.s. *Antinous* and landed at Falmouth. Captain Cundy was taken into the submarine as a prisoner, and at the point of the revolver questioned on various subjects concerning the war. Giving no satisfactory answer, he was sent to join four other British shipmasters below. There was practically no accommodation, although the food was fairly good. He was allowed on deck during the day, but whenever a ship was sighted was immediately sent below.

The submarine was the notorious U 35, commanded by the son of a French officer, made prisoner of war in 1870, and a German mother. Cruising outside the Straits of Gibraltar she had already sunk the steamers *Parkgate*, *Maplewood*, *Patagonia*, and *Brisbane River*, taking their masters as prisoners. On the morning of the

19th of April, the steamer *Sowell* (3,781 tons gross) was torpedoed without warning, and sank in one and a half minutes. On returning to the spot where the steamer had disappeared, nine of the crew were taken out of the water; the remainder, including all the officers, had disappeared.

Next day the steamer *Lowdale* was sunk by bombs. Her boats were ordered alongside, and the nine survivors of the *Sowell* who had been on board the submarine for twenty-four hours were put in them. None of the *Lowdale's* crew were taken prisoners. Later in the morning, when the submarine was one or two miles off Cape St. Vincent, six neutral steamers (Scandinavians) were stopped, boarded, and examined. Three were sunk by bombs and the others allowed to proceed. Early in the afternoon, when the submarine was out of sight of Cape St. Vincent, an Italian barque (name unknown), loaded with scrap iron and bound for Genoa, was sunk by bombs. Before sinking the ship two large casks containing fresh water were taken on board the submarine, which sought shelter from the fresh south-east wind and sea under Cape St. Vincent to enable the crew to empty the casks into her tank. Captain Cundy was allowed on deck while this was being





NAME	GRADE	COMPONENT	STATUS	DATE	REMARKS
1910	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1910	1st Lt
1911	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1911	1st Lt
1912	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1912	1st Lt
1913	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1913	1st Lt
1914	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1914	1st Lt
1915	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1915	1st Lt
1916	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1916	1st Lt
1917	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1917	1st Lt
1918	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1918	1st Lt
1919	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1919	1st Lt
1920	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1920	1st Lt
1921	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1921	1st Lt
1922	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1922	1st Lt
1923	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1923	1st Lt
1924	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1924	1st Lt
1925	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1925	1st Lt
1926	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1926	1st Lt
1927	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1927	1st Lt
1928	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1928	1st Lt
1929	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1929	1st Lt
1930	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1930	1st Lt
1931	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1931	1st Lt
1932	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1932	1st Lt
1933	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1933	1st Lt
1934	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1934	1st Lt
1935	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1935	1st Lt
1936	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1936	1st Lt
1937	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1937	1st Lt
1938	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1938	1st Lt
1939	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1939	1st Lt
1940	1st Lt	100A1	Sam	1940	1st Lt

by permission of the Admiralty

THE COMMANDER OF THE U. S. S. BLOTING OUT THE NAMES OF  
SUNKEN SEAMEN FROM A PIRATED COPY OF LLOYD'S REGISTER.



done, and calculated they were about three miles off the Cape.

The U 35 continued cruising and sinking ships, mostly under neutral or Italian flags. The last British steamer to be sunk belonged to the Moor Line (Messrs. Runciman and Co.), laden with flour and bound for Genoa. The crew were left in their boats, but before the ship was sunk a lot of her stores were taken on board the submarine. On the 24th of April Captain Cundy was told that the enemy vessel was going back to the base owing to shortage of ammunition. Of nine torpedoes and 650 shells with which she had started her cruise, only 22 shells were now left. She passed Gibraltar on the 26th of April at 2 a.m., steaming on the surface. The Spanish coast was kept in sight, and the U 35, in passing about three miles off Cape Palos on the 28th of April (2 p.m.) hoisted the German ensign. About 5 p.m., whilst the imprisoned commanders were having tea, two shots were fired and the submarine was stopped. An hour later Captain Cundy was allowed on deck. Half a mile off was a Spanish-steamer hoisting her boat in the davits, and dipping the Spanish ensign. He was told that the Spaniards had been alongside.

Progress was slow going up the Mediterranean on account of strong easterly wind and high sea, and for about five nights the submarine was submerged from 7.30 p.m. to 4 a.m.

She passed Sicily on the 4th of May, the weather fine and the sea smooth, and Captain Cundy was told a German submarine was in sight. About 1 p.m. *her commander arrived on board the U 35.* As he left, Captain Cundy was allowed on deck, and was told the submarine was the U 47 outward bound from Pola. About 2.30 p.m. the U 35 continued her voyage, still with fine weather and a smooth sea. Each night at 7.30, even in calm water, the submarine was submerged for test purposes.

The U 35 steamed up the Adriatic on the surface, passing the Allies' patrol boats in the Straits of Otranto. At 1 p.m. on the 6th of May she arrived in Cattaro Harbour and moored alongside the parent ship *Gaa*, a former German liner. Here Captain Cundy was taken ashore and placed in an old fort.

During the cruise of thirty-six days the submarine had sunk twenty-one steamers and three sailing vessels.

The *Tremorvah* fought for over two hours against

a submarine armed with two heavy guns. At 3.45 p.m. on the 11th of April, 1917, the enemy was sighted on the starboard beam distant about six miles, and steaming at fifteen to sixteen knots. The *Tremorvah* altered course to bring her astern, and prepared for action. The submarine opened fire at 4 p.m. at a range of five miles. Five minutes later the *Tremorvah's* gun replied. At least 150 rounds were fired by the submarine, and the ship was hit about twenty times and considerably damaged. The *Tremorvah* fired 76 rounds, all of which fell short. A smoke box was used, but the smoke hung too low to be of any advantage. The *Tremorvah* was finally abandoned at 6 o'clock after a running fight lasting two hours and fifteen minutes. The master reported that the crew behaved splendidly with no exceptions, especially commending the two gunners and Seaman Beckerleg, who served the gun during the action. The master, chief engineer, and two gunners were taken prisoners. The rest of the ship's company in their boats reached Phillipville, where the chief officer died of wounds. For gallantry in this action Chief Officer T. C. Rowe, Chief Engineer Jones, acting Corporal G. D. Wright, Private Edward W. White, and Seaman

Beckerleg were mentioned in the *London Gazette*; and to the master, Captain Clifford Lower, "in recognition of his gallant conduct," was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The *Trelyon*, on passage from Archangel to London with a cargo of wood, was mined on the 21st of July, 1917. While being towed into Scarborough by patrol boats, she grounded on the outlying rocks. Two and a half months later she was beached off Scarborough, but owing to continued bad weather became a total wreck.

On passage from Cardiff to Italy with coal in August, 1917, the *Treloske* was twice attacked by submarines. Each time the master managed to evade the enemy. On the 29th of August, to the west of Cape Finisterre, a third torpedo attack at night sealed her fate. One seaman was drowned, but the rest of the crew were picked up by H.M. Destroyer *Hydra*, and landed at Lisbon. For the resource displayed in meeting the two earlier attacks the master of the *Treloske* was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The *Trelissick*, with a cargo of grain from Boston, U.S.A., bound for St. Nazaire, was torpedoed 100 miles west of Brest on the 15th of July, 1917.

At the time, she had on board the crew of the *Exford*, picked up after that vessel had been torpedoed. The master and gunners of the *Trelissick* were taken prisoners of war. All the rest of the ship's company escaped in the boats, and were rescued by the U.S. patrol steamer *Harvard*, which landed them at Brest.

On the 3rd of September, 1917, just after midnight, when on passage from North Russia to Manchester with a cargo of ore, the *Treverbyn*, then in a position to the west of Oban, struck a mine, and sank in deep water immediately. The flash of the explosion and the foundering of the vessel were noticed by the Ushinish lightkeeper. He, after some delay, managed to find a shepherd, by whom he sent news of the wreck to a neighbouring village. A fishing boat set out to the rescue. By the time the scene of the disaster was reached at 3 a.m., twenty-seven members of the crew had perished; seven survivors clinging to the wreckage were picked up.

The *Treveal*, on passage from Algiers to Glasgow with a cargo of ore, was torpedoed when off the Skerries on the 4th of February, 1918, and sank in two minutes. There was no time to launch the boats. Thirty-three of the crew perished; only

three survived, and, after being for eight hours on a raft, were picked up by the coasting steamer *Agnes Ellen* and landed at Newry.

The record of the Mercantile Company shows the same grievous loss of tonnage and life by enemy action. The s.s. *Coquet* of this Company, going from Torreveiga to Rangoon with salt, was sunk by bombs by an Austrian submarine 200 miles east of Malta on the 4th of January, 1916. The chief officer's boat, containing sixteen men, was never heard of again. The captain's boat, after cruising about for several days, landed on the coast of Tripoli. The crew collected shell-fish for food, and sheltered for the night in some ruined huts. Early next morning they were attacked by Bedouins, and three of them were killed. The master was shot in the shoulder and, feigning death, was left where he lay. The remaining eleven members of the crew were carried inland across the desert, and endured eight months' captivity. The master found his way to the nearest town, was kindly treated by Italians, and later sent home. The bodies of the men who had been killed were recovered and buried with military honours by the Italian authorities at Derna.

Sixty miles south-west of Gibraltar the *Ganges*,



on passage from Cardiff to Italy, was torpedoed and sunk by an enemy submarine on the 30th of July, 1917. A British torpedo boat heard the explosion, raced to the spot, and rescued the crew. Having landed them at Gibraltar, the torpedo boat returned to the position at which the ship had gone down, and waited. In a short time the submarine was seen coming to the surface. Sighting the torpedo boat she made haste to submerge. But it was too late; she was effectively served with depth charges. When the water cleared an Admiralty diver ascertained that she was 200 feet in length and bore the name of *Starlight*.

The Mercantile Company's steamship *Min* was caught by the outbreak of war at Petrograd. In July, 1917, she was brought out of the Baltic by units of the Royal Navy and reached a British port. In the interval she had been employed in the Gulf of Bothnia in the transportation service of the Russian Government.

The *Foyle II*. (Captain Evans), on passage from New York to London, was, when off the Scilly Islands on the 31st of January, 1917, attacked by shell-fire from a submarine. The *Foyle's* gunner promptly replied and a lively exchange of shots ensued. The *Foyle II*. was several times

hit, one shell penetrating her deck and a bulk-head and exploding in No. 3 hold. She, however, made good practice and scored one or more hits. Finding the contest not to his liking, the submarine commander dived, and the *Foyle II.* at full speed steamed away to the south and escaped. Captain Evans was awarded Lloyd's silver medal and a cheque for £50. To this the Merchant Ships Gratuities Committee added a grant of £100 and a further sum of £316 10s. for division among the crew.

## CHAPTER XII

### ESCAPE

Two events of an unusual character deserve a separate place in this history. The *Poona*, mined in the Channel, was, against almost overwhelming odds, brought to port and safely docked. The *Aparima*, belonging to the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand, was torpedoed near one o'clock on a winter night, and sank in eight minutes with a loss of fifty-seven lives. Of the fifty-eight survivors, some escaped by causes which must be described as miraculous.

The value of the *Poona* and her cargo when she set out from London for Calcutta on the 3rd of December, 1916, was not far short of three quarters of a million pounds sterling.

Steaming down Channel on the afternoon of the 6th of December, at a position about nine miles south of Beachy Head, she struck a submarine mine, which exploded under her forefoot, made a gaping wound in her hull under water, and

blew off the hatches of No. 1 hold, at the same time forcing up and buckling the forward well deck through the whole of its width, and reducing the winches, derricks, cargo gear, and other tackle forward of the bridge to a hopeless mass of wreckage. Farther aft the ship was split transversely, the deck plating being fractured and forced open, and the fissure extending down the ship's side to the water's edge. In these appalling circumstances anything might happen. The ship seemed to be sinking by the head, and the commander gave orders to ring off the engines and lower away the boats. The crew having been transferred to the patrol vessels, the commander and chief officer, entering a small cutter, made the tour of the ship's hull in order to estimate the damage and the chances of bringing her to a port of refuge. The inrush of water appeared to be practically confined to the forward hold, and they concluded that, as long as the bulkhead abaft this held, the vessel would remain afloat. The patrol boats were therefore signalled to come alongside, and the commander, chief engineer, officers, and six volunteer lascars went on board again. Soundings showed sixteen feet of water

in No. 1 hold. The damage amidships was not of a kind to admit much water, but the transverse splitting of the deck and side plating at this point nursed a peril of another kind, for any strain from heavy weather or the action of the sea might easily break the ship's back. The only course appeared to be to tow her stern foremost, and a wireless request for towing craft was sent to the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth. Four hours after the explosion a tug arrived, and an hour later a patrol vessel. Hawasers were passed, and the commander signalled for the rest of the crew to come aboard. Steam was raised, the engines and boilers being fortunately undamaged, and the *Poona*, in order to assist the tugs, began to go easy astern with her own engines. The ship arrived off Seaford Head in thick weather at one o'clock midnight, anchored, and reported by wireless to the naval authorities at Portsmouth. By this time her condition was becoming worse, as water had begun to find its way into the greater part of her length, so that it was necessary to run the steam pumps continually in order to keep pace with the leakage. The commander was urged to beach her, but held

on doggedly to his original intention, believing that with adequate assistance she would keep afloat long enough to be brought into safety. At 5 a.m. he heard from Portsmouth that Admiralty tugs were on the way, and presently they arrived. He weighed anchor at 7 a.m. and, in tow of two tugs and H.M.S. *Ere*, continued his voyage at between three and four knots. The weather was still thick, and the captain of the destroyer had to navigate the flotilla by the lead alone, taking soundings continually until the lights came in sight.

Forty hours after the mine had struck her, the *Poona* was anchored at Spithead. But the cares of the Commander and of the Company's nautical inspector (who by the P. and O. Chairman's instructions had boarded the ship on her passage down) were by no means ended. The deep-draught docks on all the south coast were at this time congested by ships undergoing urgent repairs—many of them damaged by submarine attack—and it was necessary during some anxious hours to wait at the anchorage until a dock in Portsmouth Harbour could be cleared to receive the ship. This was, perhaps, the worst time of all, as she was completely helpless, and, with a fresh wind

blowing, the list to port increased; the open fracture amidships was thereby brought more under water, and the level in her holds began steadily to rise. On Saturday morning, twenty-four hours after her arrival at Spithead, a berth had been cleared for her and, the tide serving, preparations were made to tow her into harbour. It was not too soon. The water had risen so much in the holds by this time that the ship was almost *in extremis*, but by the narrowest of margins her skipper's faith in her destiny was justified. With two tugs alongside and one ahead she was towed stern foremost into Portsmouth Dockyard, and by 1 p.m. that day was safely locked into her graving dock.

The commander had well earned and duly received the silver medal of Lloyd's Committee. Next to the captain and owners, none had more reason to be satisfied than underwriters, for a war-risk which might, if handled with less skill and fortitude, have developed into a total loss was confined within the comparatively modest limits of the cost of repairing the ship and finding compensation for a proportion of damaged cargo.

## THE "APARIMA"

Among the many catastrophes of the submarine war the loss of the *Aparima* was one of the most tragical.

The *Aparima*, in ballast, was bound from London to Barry. She took her sea pilot on board at Gravesend and steamed to the Downs, and thence, on the 18th of November, 1917, having received route instructions, proceeded to Dungeness, at which point her zigzagging course began. Approaching Beachy Head darkness came on, the sky was heavily overcast, and soon she was enveloped in a blacker night than any her commander remembered. There was a light wind from the west and a slight sea.

The ship ran for some hours without incident, although Captain Doorly knew, soon after midnight, that he was approaching a point where all his skill and experience would be needed. For to the north of the prescribed course was a "prohibited area," and ahead lay a sunken wreck, beyond which it was necessary to go before hauling to the southward in order to clear a "dangerous area" of which he had been warned and which lay to the east of the Shambles Lightship. His mind was



occupied by these perplexities when the after-part of the ship was rent by a violent explosion. No ship or craft of any description, no land or shore lights, were visible. Cadet Murray was on the lookout in the crow's-nest, Cadet Clayton as extra lookout on the bridge, and the gun's crew aft.

The ship trembled heavily and immediately settled down by the stern. The captain noted that the time was 0.52 a.m., pricked off the position on the chart—7 miles S. by W.,  $\frac{3}{4}$  W. (magnetic) from Anvil Point—and rushed to communicate it for transmission by the wireless operators. As the S.O.S. tapped out, the sea, with the ship's stern sinking rapidly, hissed up the after-part of the boat deck past the door of the Marconi house. It was still necessary to get rid of the secret instructions and confidential papers. Returning hurriedly, on the way to his cabin, along the boat deck—now steeply inclined—the captain observed that hands were at stations lowering the boats. The signal was made to abandon ship; the engines were already out of action. By the foot of the bridge ladder he found the pilot, who, remarking "We have got it this time," moved off towards the rail.

The ship was now tilted, fore and aft, at an

angle of near forty-five degrees, with her stern on the ground in twenty to twenty-two fathoms of water. The sea continued its onward movement towards the fore part as the bow settled down. Noticing some boats' painters still fast to the starboard rail, the captain cast adrift two of the boats, and, in his life-belt, leaped into the sea. He afterwards noted that his watch had stopped at 0.58 a.m. For a few seconds he swam in the darkness until, by good chance, he found the gig (No. 3 boat); it was already overcrowded, and in it, amongst others, were Third Officer Cooper, Cadet Sutherland, and the pilot. As they hauled him aboard he shouted a warning to pull away, as the ship was going down.

Most of the gig's company, with the captain, then got into one of the life-boats, leaving the third officer and a crew in the gig to search for survivors. With a sudden glow of fire and smoke from the funnel as the boiler-room submerged the ship sank at 1 a.m. Then followed, says the captain, the cries of men struggling in the water. The men in the boats pulled towards the sounds, but in the blackness of the night not many of the drowning seamen could be found. The captain's boat was filling rapidly with water, and it was with

some trouble that the plug, which had been disturbed, was discovered and replaced. The natives in the boat seemed dazed, but Cassab Hassan Woolla and Saloon Topass Moni Lal baled continuously until the boat was somewhat cleared of water. Matches were found and a lamp lit, and it was then possible to burn a flare. Four other flare points soon appeared, one from a life-raft, whose sole occupant was found to be Cadet Bevan. Further search for survivors was made—without avail. The cries in the darkness had ceased.

Sail was at length set, and the boat headed north for the shore. In her were twenty-six men, including the sixth engineer, the first wireless operator, boatswain, two A.B.'s, four cadets, sixteen natives, and the commander. The black shapes of several steamers loomed up from time to time, but not near enough to hail. After sailing for some distance, a steamer showing a port light was sighted to the south, towards which the boat was headed. She proved to be a Norwegian, the *Gulhaug*, bound from Barry to St. Helens. Boarding her, the commander and his party received sailorly kindness in the way of food and dry clothing. She reached her destination next day, and the party of survivors

was conveyed to Portsmouth by a naval patrol vessel.

News of the other boats was gathered afterwards. The gig landed at St. Alban's Head with the third officer, pilot, three engineers, three cadets, three A.B.'s, and five natives. One boat, No. 2, containing Second Engineer Hirst, four cadets, and four natives, and another boat, No. 3, in which were Seventh Engineer Mayo and five natives, were picked up at dawn and taken to Weymouth. No. 2 boat, after reaching the water from the sinking ship, had been caught by its davits, overturned and submerged, and several of the occupants had been drowned. Among these was the chief steward, whose body was afterwards recovered and brought to Weymouth. Chief Officer Daniel and Cadet Denholm were also in this boat. Clinging to the boat's stern, chief officer and cadet both went down as the ship sank; Denholm rose to the surface again with the boat and was saved, but the chief officer was drowned.

Another boat, in charge of Second Officer McDonald, was also carried down by the davit-heads, but refloated full of water; the second officer, grievously injured, came up with her. His

sufferings were too great to be borne, and saying "Good-bye, *Aparima*," he rolled into the sea.

As soon as the explosion occurred the chief engineer, Mr. Rogerson, had hurried to the engine-room and, with Third Engineer Gunn and Sixth Engineer McKeegan, managed to half close the tunnel watertight door. They were driven back by rushing water, and the engine-room bulkhead began to bulge with the pressure from the after-holds. Saying, "You can't do any more, lads, get on deck," the chief engineer made his way to the ladder outside his cabin, mounted to the boat deck, and was last seen gazing down the engine-room skylight.

The wireless operators were caught in their house by the rising water and went down with the ship. First Operator Vipan, face upwards against the roof, pulled himself outwards and, floating to the surface, was picked up. On board the *Aparima* were twenty-nine cadets, seventeen of whom were drowned. Some had miraculous escapes. Cadets Sutherland and Denholm were standing in their quarters aft when bricks from the fireplace were blown into the air, and the magazine hatch came up with a blinding explosion. Calling out "All hands on deck!" the two reached

and mounted the ladder. Four of the cadets were washed to safety up the companion with a tide of wreckage; two were washed through a skylight and saved. One, in the port middle room, jumped out of his bunk up to his neck in water, and swimming, touched two of his mess-mates who were also afloat; both were drowned, but he was carried by the rush of water up the ventilator shaft, forced out of the cowl, and fell on a small raft. He then transferred himself to a larger one; it was he who burnt a flare and was picked up.

Of the native crew of sixty-two, thirty-one were lost; and of fifty-three Europeans, twenty-six were lost. Among the latter were the gunners, who, at their station aft, must have been instantly killed by the explosion, or drowned.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WORK OF THE RAIDERS

THE enemy submarine worked destruction by means of three agents—torpedo attack, gun-fire, and the sowing of mines; but with the exception of one or two excursions to the American coast, and as far south as the Cape Verde Islands, she operated in European waters, where the convergence of the trade routes gave the greatest scope for her piratical activities.

The operations of the raider or commerce destroyer, once she had run the North Sea gauntlet, were world-wide. Feeding on the carcasses of her victims in the matter of coal and stores, she steamed from sea to sea, and, while she retained her roving freedom, no ship, however distant from the scene of war, could be counted safe, no port could be fully assured of immunity from enemy mines.

Ten steamers of the associated companies, totalling 58,546 tons gross, were lost by the action of enemy commerce raiders.

The *Kaipara* of the New Zealand Shipping Company was among the earliest victims. She was sunk in the Atlantic by gun-fire from the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* within a fortnight of the declaration of war (16th of August, 1914).

The *Emden* in the Eastern seas was for a time a very serious menace. The danger which had to be met, or preferably evaded, when she was sinking shipping in the vicinity of Ceylon caused considerable and daily anxiety. Twelve P. and O. steamers called every month at Colombo, and it was almost a miracle that, during the *Emden's* presence in these waters, none of these steamers was sunk or captured. Although the British India Company usually had forty or fifty ships within the area of the raider's operations, only one B. I. steamer, the *Chilkana*, was destroyed by her. The Mercantile Steamship Company's s.s. *Foyle* (4,147 tons) was captured and sunk in the Indian Ocean by the *Emden* on the 27th of September while on passage in ballast from Italy to Burmah. The crew were permitted to escape, and landed at Colombo. The *Indus*, 3,393 tons, of the Nourse Line, was sunk, also by the *Emden*, on the 10th of September. Thirteen days later the enemy cruiser bombarded



Madras. The injury to the city was considerable, and incidentally the B. I. steamer *Chupra*, which was lying off the port, was badly damaged. Members of the crew were wounded by splinters of shot and fragments of wreckage from shell-fire, and one of the ship's cadets, Mr. Fletcher, was killed.

The Mercantile Company's s.s. *Pruth*, while on passage from nitrate ports to Europe, fell in with the *Karlsruhe*, and was sunk in the Atlantic on the 9th of October, 1914. The crew escaped in their own boats, and landed at St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands.

None of these ships was armed. A most gallant fight was that of the New Zealand Company's *Olaki* against the *Moewe* in March, 1917.

In March, 1917, too, the *Jumna* of the Mercantile Company fell in with the *Wolf*, and three days later was sunk in the Bay of Bengal. The enemy had learned to regard the British seaman as one of his most-to-be-feared opponents, for the whole of the crew were taken prisoners and only released after the signing of the armistice. The story of his voyage in the *Wolf* is told by the commander of the *Jumna* in these pages. The *Cumberland*, of the Federal Steam Navigation Company, struck

one of the *Wolf's* mines, and sank off Gabo Island on the 6th of July, 1917. The *Wairuna* (Union Steamship Company of New Zealand) was captured by the *Wolf* on the 2nd of June, 1917, plundered, and sunk off Sunday Island. On the 24th of June, 1917, a mine laid by the *Wolf* caused the destruction of the P. and O. mail steamer *Mongolia*, which sank in thirteen minutes.

Some of these events are detailed in the pages which follow.

### THE "OTAKI"

"ADMIRALTY, May 24, 1919.

"The King has been pleased to approve of the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned officers:

\* \* \* \* \*

"Lieutenant Archibald Bisset Smith, R.N.R.

"For most conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when in command of the s.s. *Otaki*, on the 10th of March, 1917.

"At about 2.30 p.m. on the 10th of March, 1917, the s.s. *Otaki*, whose armament consisted of one 4.7-inch gun for defensive purposes, sighted the disguised German raider *Moewe*, which was armed with four 5.9-inch, one 4.1-inch, and two 22-pounder guns, and two torpedo tubes. The *Moewe* kept the *Otaki* under observation for

some time, and finally called upon her to stop. This Lieutenant Smith refused to do, and a duel ensued at ranges of 1,000 to 2,000 yards.

"During this action the *Otaki* scored several hits on the *Moewe*, causing considerable damage and starting a fire, which lasted for three days. She sustained several casualties and received much damage herself, and was heavily on fire. Lieut. Smith, therefore, gave orders for the boats to be lowered to allow the crew to be rescued. He remained on the ship himself, and went down with her when she sank, with the British colours still flying, after what was described in an enemy account as 'a duel as gallant as naval history can relate.'"

The extract from the *London Gazette* (25th of May, 1919) gives in curt, official language a summary of the fight.

On the date named the *Otaki*, a steamer of the New Zealand Shipping Company of 9,575 gross tons, outward bound from London for New Zealand, had arrived at a position in the Atlantic midway between the Azores and Newfoundland. Between 12 noon and 1 o'clock on that day, the weather being hazy and the sea disturbed, a steamer of unknown nationality was descried about three miles distant. The commander put on speed and tried to get away, for by this time the exploits of the *Wolf* and *Seeadler* were well

known, and the *Otaki's* commander seems to have had no doubt of the stranger's character. She was, in fact, the *Moewe*, then returning to Germany from her second expedition. Originally built, under the name of *Pungo*, by the Tecklenborg Shipbuilding Company at Geestemunde, for the carriage of fruit, she was, early in the war, taken over in an uncompleted condition by the German Admiralty, equipped with an armoured belt amidships, and with guns and torpedo tubes. On this second voyage, which lasted eight months, she had been mine-laying and commerce raiding as far afield as latitude 27 W. and between longitude 20 and 21 S. The following account is given in the words of the commander and chief officer of the *Moewe*, from whose diaries the story here woven has been translated:

“10th *March*, 1917.—The weather is quickly getting worse, heavy rain squalls spring up, and at times it is perfectly thick with rain. About one o'clock I am on the bridge, there is still very little to see, when suddenly through the mist I sight a steamer. There is just sufficient time to put the rudder hard to port in order to keep off her until the weather clears. It can very soon be seen that she is remarkably fast. In spite of this I take up the pursuit, although I am not at all

sure that she has not seen my manoeuvre and may not betray me by wireless as soon as I have turned away.

"A merry chase now commences in a rough sea. The Englishman is going very steadily whilst we are rolling and labouring heavily. She is considerably larger than our vessel and is going so fast that we cannot overtake her, and once she even disappears in a squall. When the weather clears she is 1,000 metres farther ahead—a proof that she has smelt a rat. I now order our last auxiliary engine to be worked at full speed; this has its effect: very slowly we gain on her, and every few minutes the distance between us is reduced by 50 metres. I will not yet stop her by gun-fire, because we are labouring to such an extent that it is impossible to fire with accuracy at 3,000 metres distance. As a large gun can be seen at the stern with its crew standing by, there is no doubt that she will defend herself, and I therefore decide to proceed cautiously and try to put her out of action as quickly as possible. Thus we both proceed at full speed, and slowly but surely the *Moewe* gains. When the distance has been reduced to 2,000 metres, it appears to me to be the most favourable moment for attacking her. The usual orders are given; to comply with the usages of war, I fire a warning shot. Immediately after we notice that the gun on board the steamer is cleared for action, and I then open fire on her. Some of our shots find their mark at once, but it is very difficult for the gunner to take aim owing to the violent movements of the *Moewe*.

"The enemy opens a regular fire; most of her shots hit just below the bridge, where they explode with a loud report, and each time develop a considerable heat. She has luck and an extremely good gunner on board. Soon he scores an 'outer,' which passes through the signal bridge, without causing much damage. Shell follows shell, each side firing hard. On my way along the deck, just as I pass by the funnel, I am flung down full length. I scramble up to see a large smoke cloud pouring from the side of the ship. The enemy has scored a bull's-eye. Nobody had thought of such a thing. Even 'H.' and 'T.' discover a great respect for the English pigmy. The shell has pierced the belt, entering the stoking-room, and set the bunker coal on fire. The flames are spreading rapidly, and water is pouring in from the hole in the hull. Then the prisoners break loose; panic has broken out in their compartment. At the first hit of the shells they rush aft towards the exit. The guards have, however, succeeded, in accordance with their instructions, in leaving the compartment through the only door of the strong iron bulkhead and closing the door. A small sliding panel in the wall is then opened, and the panic-stricken people brought to their senses, first with pacifying words, then by showing them revolvers, and finally by firing a few shots over their heads.

"The *Otaki* and the *Moewe* are now lying close to each other. The *Otaki* has a heavy list to starboard and is burning aft.

"Our situation is far from happy; the enemy lies there, refusing to sink, and firing shot after shot.

Fortunately her own condition and the weather prevent her aim from being effective. Half an hour later, hammered and torn by our guns, but still firing, she sinks beneath the waves."

Such was the end of the *Otaki*. With her one small gun she fought the *Moewe*, which, besides torpedoes, carried six heavy guns, and did her sore damage, and then went down, her flag still flying!

Two apprentices of the *Otaki* working with the gun-team disappeared during the action. The body of one was found on the main deck astern of the poop deck, and that of the other on the same deck by the forward starboard corner of the poop deck.

One of the gunners was badly hit through the thigh, but managed to hobble out of the way of the remainder of the gun-crew.

The survivors of the crew were picked up that night by the *Moewe*, and the wounded cared for on board. It took twenty-four hours to subdue the fire on board the raider. The other damage principally consisted of a bad hole amidships, and another one in the stern; the engines had been untouched. With temporary steering-gear rigged, the raider limped from the scene of the battle,

repairing ship the while. It was three days before she was in trim. On the third day the dead were buried.

Than the master, officers and men of the *Otaki*, none can more greatly claim to have upheld the great tradition of the English seaman.

### THE "MONGOLIA."

"28th June, 1917.—The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company regret to announce that as the result of the sinking of the *Mongolia* by a mine fifty-eight miles off Bombay, they fear that the following have lost their lives—Passengers: Mr. E. Hopo, Mr. W. Watt, and one Parsee gentleman, name unknown. Ship's engineers: Third Engineer F. C. W. Lampard, Supernumerary Fourth Engineer W. Davidson, Assistant Engineer F. Linwood. Winchman T. J. Saunders, Boiler-maker T. Evans, Quartermaster P. Kerridge. Also fourteen of the native crew. . . ."

So ran the official announcement of the destruction of the *Mongolia*.

The *Wolf* had put out some eleven months before from Cuxhaven with a cargo of 500 submarine mines, destined to be placed in the ap-



proaches to British harbours and on ocean tracks in the Eastern seas. Eluding the vigilance of the North Sea Watch, she had made her way, unsuspected, via the Cape to the Indian Ocean. On her passages then and subsequently, from port to port, she sank such allied steamers as chanced to cross her path; nor did she cease from her activities until every one of the 500 mines had been sown in places as widely apart as the Arabian Sea, the Cape of Good Hope, the waters about Hong-Kong, and the southernmost islands of Polynesia. Finishing at Singapore, she made her way out by the Lombok Strait and, still sinking or capturing shipping, regained German waters via the Cape and Iceland. Among her earliest Eastern visits was that to the waters west of Bombay, and among her victims was the P. and O. Company's Australian mail and passenger steamer *Mongolia*.

At noon on the 23rd of June, 1917, in the Arabian Sea, distant seventeen miles from the Indian coast, the *Mongolia* struck what was probably a two-tier mine of the "delayed action" type, the main charge being the later one, for it seems to have exploded beneath the keel close to the engine-room. The force of the explosion, and the extent

of her under-water injury may be gauged from the statement of a survivor that the 6-inch gun, mounted on the distant after-part of the poop deck, was started from its seating and moved through a distance of several feet.

Although those on board the *Mongolia* were drawing near to Bombay, and beginning to feel some security, all officers and boats' crews had received instructions for just such an emergency long before the event; on the day preceding the disaster, passengers and boats' crews had been exercised at boat stations for thirty minutes, and boats experimentally lowered to the promenade deck rail in a position to receive women and children.

All this was of the greatest value.

The *Mongolia* sank in thirteen minutes, but in this short interval every surviving soul had been removed from the ship, and, except a few who, in life-belts, had taken to the water, placed in the ship's boats.

At the terrible sound of the explosion the crew hurried to their stations, the available boats (which in the prevailing heavy monsoon weather had had to be stowed in-board) were smartly turned out, and passengers lined up in life-belts. Some

passengers helped to get the boats away. "Ladies," says the commander, "were chatting and laughing as if starting for a picnic."

The native crew behaved admirably. Six of the boats were enveloped in clouds of escaping steam, and no one could get near them, so some rearrangement of the boats' parties had to be improvised. Twelve Portuguese servants who were in their allotted boat ready to leave returned without hesitation to the deck when ordered to make room for others. The commander mentions, among instances of native chivalry, the fireman who clung to a runaway fall in his efforts to prevent it from "taking charge" and so "up-ending" the boat. He hung on, was carried to the upper block, where his hand was jammed in a sheave by the running rope, and in this position he stoically bore the pain of lacerated flesh until the boat touched water and the fall was at rest.

Twelve minutes after the explosion, when the forward part of the ship was well awash and the poop was submerged, the four executive officers, headed by the chief, approached the commander, saluted and reported "All passengers away, sir." They were ordered to the boatswain's boat, with

the wireless operator, who had, until the last moment, continued ineffectual efforts to send out the S.O.S. One hundred yards away the boat was stopped, head towards the ship, and the commander was picked up. He was not the last, by one, to leave, for while in the water he observed, clinging to one of the side-ladders, a fireman, who asked what he should do. Not knowing the Hindustani for "swim for it," he called out the native equivalent for "take a bath!" The fireman obeyed and was picked up.

As soon as those floating in the sea had been pulled into the boats, the order was given "to make sail, keep the sea right astern, and effect a landing, if possible, before dark; failing this, to keep off the shore until daylight." The explosion had affected the boats' compasses; this the commander knew. To keep the sea astern with the south-west monsoon blowing was to ensure a course which would take the boats in the direction of Janjira harbour.

The boat in charge of Chief Steward Shonley was the smartest away, and under jib and foremast took full advantage of an approaching heavy squall. Nearing the land he was fortunate to

find a cove, sheltered, but accessible only by taking a right-angled turn. It was now nearly dark, for in these latitudes twilight does not last long, but the chief steward indicated the course to the ten boats following in company by showing two pairs of Verrey lights, successively, at a right angle, the second pair indicating the way into the cove when, the boat being in position for the turn, the first pair leading from the sea had been extinguished.

After vainly searching for a suitable landing and receiving reports from his officers, the captain decided, as it was now dark, to run for Bombay with the supernumerary chief officer's boat and obtain assistance. The explosion had wrecked the wireless aerials, so actually the first news of the disaster reached Bombay by the boat which, with fifty-four of the survivors on board, was sailed by Supernumerary Chief Officer Hoskyns. The commander arrived an hour later. The purser, who was one of those landed at Janjira, walked through the jungle to seek assistance, and, shortly after Mr. Hoskyns's arrival at Bombay, succeeded in getting word through that eleven of the boats had made a good landing some fifty miles down the coast. At daylight two more

boats followed into the cove, and one had fetched Janjira Harbour. Relief ships were at once provisioned and despatched, and arrived at Janjira the following morning, carrying with them the commander.

Questioned as to how he had found his way into the cove, Coxswain Lewis, an old P. and O. quartermaster, replied: "It was like this, sir: they [the occupants of the boat] say to Mr. Shonley, 'You know what the captain's orders was, Mr. Shonley?' He says, 'Yes; if I couldn't make a landing afore night to hold off until the morning; but I don't think it's dark,' he says—you sec, sir, it was just betwixt and between—so with that they turns to me, 'What do you think, Lewis?' 'Well,' I say, 'I'm with the majority of yer. You say take her in, I'll take her in'—and I dono it."

Meantime, the Nawab of Janjira, to whom natives had carried the news, had given orders for every possible attention to be given to the *Mongolia's* people, and he personally saw that these orders were carried out. It was not a lengthy or difficult business to transfer the shipwrecked passengers and crew to the relief steamer; and a few hours later all were in safety at Bombay,

where the Company's agents provided clothes and money in all necessary cases.

But twenty-three innocent non-combatants had been done to death, the Company had lost one more ship and five valuable officers, and another item had been added to the account which Germany was ultimately to be called upon to settle.

### THE "WOLF."

On the 22nd of February, 1917, the Mercantile Steamship Company's s.s. *Jumna*, 4,152 tons gross register, outward bound from Torre Viejo, Spain, to Calcutta with a cargo of salt, left Suez. She passed down the Red Sea, signalled her number as usual to Lloyd's station on Perim Island, and, keeping strictly to the special route prescribed by the naval authorities, steamed into the Indian Ocean without incident. What followed is told, with but slight variation, in the words of Captain Wickman, the *Jumna's* commander:

"On February 28th we passed a homeward-bound steamer, hull down, with only masts and funnel visible. This proved to be the s.s. *Turritella* of the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Line. We learned afterwards that she had been captured by the *Wolf* on the previous day, and that she was, at

the time we sighted her, manned by a German prize crew.

"Towards 6 a.m. on the 1st of March, when in my bath, I heard the sound of a heavy gun quite close to the ship, and thinking it was fired by one of our patrol vessels guarding the route—especially as I had been told at Sucz that there was no enemy in our way—I began to dress, taking my time, and expecting my chief officer to answer the signals. A few minutes later a shell dropped just beyond the ship. By this time I was on deck, and saw at a glance that the vessel holding me up was German-built and flying the enemy colours. She was passing from port to starboard across my bows, and, as I saw that everything was against me, I tried to use my stem, and followed her up in the hope of ramming her; but she was too speedy, and got out of the way. The commander evidently understood my manœuvre, and, as I afterwards learned, ordered the port after-gun to be fired at my bridge. In their hurry the gunners fired before the gun was properly trained, causing disaster to their own ship's company, for four of their men were killed and about twenty-eight seriously wounded. A great deal of damage was done around their decks: most of the port bulwarks were shot away; the main rigging shattered; a spare torpedo near the deck tube was destroyed—luckily for them, the war charge was missing—their motor boat on the after-hatch was riddled; and splinters of shell perforated two masts on the poop deck. We saw the flash and heard the report, but only understood what had happened when the enemy officer boarded my ship and made



my crew and myself prisoners. The German officer, commenting on the incident, remarked that it was the fortune of war, and that I and my bridge ought to have gone instead. Asked why I had tried to ram his ship, I replied, 'I never thought of such a thing'; but he was suspicious, blaming me for causing the accident, and kept me under observation for some time. My officers and myself were then conveyed on board the raider, the petty officers and crew being retained in the *Jumna* to work in stripping her. I may say that our crew had to do this, for guards were at their elbows who were commanded to shoot them if they did not instantly obey orders. After looting the *Jumna* of coal, stores, copper pipes, brass fittings, and everything of value that could be removed, the German commander sank our ship on the 4th of March, 1917, at 10 a.m., blowing the sides out of the engine-room and No. 2 hold.

"Our accommodation and treatment on board the raider for the first few days were very rough. Evidently they were not prepared for taking prisoners so soon, for they said they had other work to do before they commenced sinking shipping. The German officers told me openly that the chief object of the expedition was the laying of mines off the British sea-ports of the East. The *Wolf* was hiding in these latitudes after mine-laying at Cape Town, Colombo, and Bombay, and her people were greatly surprised when they captured the *Turritellu* and *Jumna* so far out of the general track. Our quarters in No. 5 'tween deck were full of coal, mine-rails, old iron, timber,

and other rubbish, but we set to work and cleaned up for ourselves. We were under strong guard at all times, and had to sleep in hammocks. The food at first was very bad and unpalatable, and there was not very much of it; but we complained to the raider's commander, and after about a week it greatly improved, and white bread, instead of their war bread, was given us. The commander tried to treat us justly, but his officers and men took delight in giving us as much annoyance as possible, telling us repeatedly that we were 'finished both on land and sea.' We always laughed and replied, 'Don't be in too much of a hurry.'

"A large motor fan, intended to give us fresh air, continually broke down, and while we were in the tropics the atmosphere of our 'tween deck quarters was very close, the temperature ranging from 90 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit and when hatches were on (as always at night) even higher. Considering the length of time my crew and myself were on board (exactly twelve months), the health of our people was generally good, and there was very little sickness among us. In tropical latitudes we were as a rule free between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. to pass the time on deck as long as nothing was to be seen, but when smoke or sail were sighted we were driven below, battened down like rats in a trap, and a strong guard put over the hatch with arms and a box of hand-grenades. On no occasion did a chance occur to break out, and if it had there was never the slightest hope of success, for with their hand-grenades the guard would have killed us all

before we could have got a footing on deck. The commander of the *Wolf* was taking no risks.

"After leaving the Indian Ocean, taking two vessels on her way (the s.s. *Wordsworth* and barque *Dee*), the *Wolf* rounded Australia and New Zealand well to the southward, out of the track of vessels, and cruised in the Pacific looking for a coal-ship. Several weeks passed but not a sail was seen. As by this time the *Wolf's* boilers were leaking badly, her Captain decided to put into Sunday Islands, intending there to effect repairs, overhaul his engines, and shift coal into bunkers. While she lay here, the Union Steamship Company's steamer *Wairuna* passed close to the island, and caused instant consternation among the raider's crew, who, believing that the *Wairuna* was a British cruiser, thought their time had come. The alarm sounded, all hands rushed to stations, and we were bundled below and battened down. When nothing happened, and the steamer was slowly disappearing, the *Wolf's* people pulled themselves together and sent their seaplane to demand her surrender or, in case of a refusal, to sink her by bombs. The seaplane brought the *Wairuna* to the raider, and the process of plunder went on again, all coal, stores, and a great deal of cargo being taken out of the vessel. Provisions, vegetables, and forty sheep came in very opportunely, as we were all on short rations. I am bound to remark here that the commander fed us as he fed his own people.

"We left Sunday Islands after destroying two or three American sailing vessels, and made for North Island, New Zealand, where mines were

laid in the vicinity of Three Kings Island, afterwards proceeding to Cook's Straits, where another mine-field was laid. From Cook's Straits the raider steered for the Australian coast and began the laying of a mine-field somewhere off Gabo Islands, or Wilson's Promontory, but was disturbed while doing so and had to clear out, full speed due south. Next day, when we were allowed on deck, we found the ship's appearance had been greatly changed: instead of tall masts and funnel she had telescoped and shortened both, and was further disguised about the decks by changes in the colour of her paint-work. The same morning we heard that the steamer *Cumberland* had been sunk by one of the mines laid overnight.

"The *Wolf* hung about the track between New Zealand and Australia for some time, but, as no shipping was seen, cruised up towards New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. On her way she picked up a wireless message announcing that the steamer *Matunga* was on a voyage to Rabaul (German New Guinea) with Admiralty coal and stores, and as the *Wolf* wanted coal very badly the commander resolved to await the *Matunga's* arrival. She duly appeared a few days later, and, like the rest of us, fell an easy victim. The *Wolf's* captain could not unload the *Matunga* very safely where he was, so he conveyed her to a land-locked harbour in the wilds of North-West New Guinea. This harbour was thoroughly adapted for a pirate's retreat, for it was surrounded by high hills, had a masked entrance, and was thus entirely hidden from seawards. No habitation

was seen nor any sign of life with the exception of a couple of diseased and half-starved natives who came alongside in a primitive native boat. In this quiet lagoon the two ships lay for nearly three weeks. On the 26th of August, 1917, the *Wolf* left her anchorage with the *Matunga*—now an empty shell—in her wake, and sank her just outside the three-mile limit.

“The course now was due west; we were steaming about ten knots and passing through the Java Sea and Islands, evidently making towards Singapore. On our way up through the Caramita Straits all the remaining mines, both on deck and below, were made ready for launching. At 9 p.m. on the 4th of September the *Wolf* began her foul task, which went on throughout the night, and by 4 a.m. on the 5th of September 150 of these devilish contrivances had been placed across the shipping tracks in the vicinity of Singapore. This finished the *Wolf's* stock of mines; she had left Kiel with over 500 on board. When the last had been dropped she made tracks for the Indian Ocean, returning by the way she had come, and passing through either the Atlas or Lombok Straits.

“In the vicinity of One-and-a-Half Degree Channel, the Japanese steamer *Hitachi Maru*, laden with Christmas goods and food-stuffs for the London market, was taken, plundered, and sunk, her numerous passengers of both sexes having first been transferred to the *Wolf*. Shifting cruising ground to the region round Mauritius and Durban, the Spanish steamer *Igotz Mendiz*, with a cargo of coal, was next captured, and part

of her cargo transferred to the bunkers of the *Wolf*. All women, old men, sick people, and boys were then moved to her from the *Wolf*, which by this time had on board an embarrassing number of captives—upwards of 500. The raider then commenced her homeward run; the majority of her crew seemed to be in doubt whether they would ever reach Germany, but the commander had no choice but to make the attempt.

“Our quarters had undergone a great change since the day when we were forced to come on board. All parts were now painted white and kept clean. Both the after ’tween decks were in use, for about 400 prisoners of war still remained on board—black crews, Japanese, and passengers living in No. 4, while captains, officers, and white crews occupied No. 5 ’tween deck. Bulkheads screened off our tables, forming mess-rooms, such as they were, and giving a little privacy to our mess. We all slept in hammocks, not less than two deep, and close alongside of each other; the air below was close and stifling, but getting into the temperate zone we did not feel it so much. Soon preparations were made for cold weather, and steam-heating pipes were laid throughout the prisoners’ quarters. Having rounded the Cape of Good Hope the *Wolf* kept in mid-Atlantic, coaling several times from the *Igotz Mendi*, and at length, on the 6th of February, 1918, made the Straits of Denmark between Greenland and Iceland. The Straits were full of pack and field ice, and the commander tried to force his way through; but after two days he gave up the attempt and had to run the blockade to the south

of Iceland. During our time in the ice the Japanese captain went over the side—poor chap—either his captivity preyed on his mind, or he preferred sudden death to a German prison camp. The *Wolf*, just keeping the hills of Iceland in sight, ran to the northwards, stood across the North Sea, and made the Norwegian land in the vicinity of Bergen. The officers and crew did not like running the blockade, fearing that if their ship fell in with a British patrol they would probably be sent to the bottom; and we were well aware that, in that case, most of us, if not all, would go too, for from the time we left Iceland until we made the Little Belt, 24th February, 1918, we were kept under hatches, our food being brought from the galleys by the German sailors. After making the Little Belt we were allowed on deck for air and exercise, and gazed on the land once more; but at this time we felt the cold very much.

“The *Wolf* dropped anchor in a little bay, the name of which I forget, and lay there some time awaiting the arrival of the *Igotz Mendi*. She, for reasons which transpired later, did not come, so the *Wolf* proceeded alone, and presently, with flags flying and bands playing, steamed once more into Kiel Harbour. Crowds of uniformed officials came off to see the ship and the prisoners. These people repeatedly told us we had lost the war, that England was finished and would suffer for it all, adding that we should not receive the same treatment under military rule in Germany as we had been accustomed to on board the *Wolf*.

Later, to our cost, we found out the truth of this.

"We landed at Kiel on the 1st of March, 1918, at 4 a.m. in cold, snowy weather, and entrained for Karlsruhe, whence, after a few days, we were sent to Heidelberg. Six weeks of this pleasant camp, and we moved on to Uchtsmoor Fauxberg, a lonely and insanitary prison area situated in the middle of peat bogs and moors, miles from anywhere. Here we were starved, our food, despite our frequent protests, being restricted to a small portion of black bread and two small plates of thin meal soup per twenty-four hours. Subsequently we were transferred to the prison camp of Clausthal, in the Harz Mountains, where we spent the rest of our time in Germany. I will not dwell upon the misery of this time; we were prisoners of war in the hands of an inhuman enemy and his inhuman creatures, and we were not the only ones.

"When the morning of the armistice dawned we looked forward to getting away very early, but were detained at Clausthal until the 11th of December, when we left for Copenhagen, and a few days later were glad to find ourselves on board a P. and O. steamer, the *Plassy*, bound for Leith under the escort of a British man-of-war."



## CHAPTER XIV

### "CONVOY"

*These records would be less complete without some account of the Atlantic convoy work in which the associated companies' steamers were chiefly engaged in the concluding months of the war. The following impressions have been communicated by a P. and O. commander.*

My experience in carrying out the duties of Commodore of Convoy was gained entirely on the Western Ocean, between September, 1917, and November, 1918.

The methods employed were very properly kept as simple as circumstances would permit, and necessarily as secret as possible—no easy matter when we consider that not only were ships of our allies convoyed across the water, but also those of neutrals, who had to be made conversant with the general working and some amount of detail.

The homeward were of course the principal and the larger convoys. The ships, when loaded, assembled at a given port, called the "port of

assembly"; and the masters on arrival reported at the convoy office and gave all necessary details of their ships, including speed, draught, and coal consumption, with a view of getting away in a suitable convoy as soon as possible. If time had been of no object, this would not have presented any difficulties, but as we knew that Britain and her Allies were in urgent need of their cargoes, time had to be considered as next in importance to safety, and port convoy officers were kept alive to this fact—it would appear so much so, that frequently, to avoid delay, caution gave way to urgency.

A master reporting at the Port Convoy Office would be asked what speed he could maintain in ordinary weather.

*Master:* Seven and a half knots.

*Official:* Can't you do more than that? There is an eight-knot convoy leaving in two days.

*Master:* I ought to be able to do nine, but what with poor coal and incompetent firemen I know at present I can't maintain more than seven and a half.

*Official:* Well, you are taking in two hundred tons of coal here; I have had excellent reports of that coal, and your firemen should improve each day. I think you could manage the speed; if not, you must proceed to —— (naming another port of assembly some hundreds of miles distant),

where there will be a convoy leaving in twelve days' time.

Whereat the master would smile and say, “Put her down eight knots.”

The smile, however, is a transient one; the master has given against his better judgment a speed he knows he cannot maintain, and does not relish the idea of being the whipped dog of the pack. Turning the matter over in his mind, he determines to call on a master friend, due to arrive, whose ship's speed he knows to be the same as his own (or a quarter of a knot less), and prevails upon him to give his speed as eight knots also.

By this time another master will have reported at the convoy office and given his speed as twelve knots.

The official will ask, “Are you sure you can maintain twelve? You are some time out of dry dock, are you not?”

The master will reply, “I can maintain twelve and a half, but I gave twelve because I can do that speed comfortably.” A discussion in the next room will follow this report, for to the port convoy officer this twelve-knot ship has a special value. Ships of an eight-knots speed are of the tramp

class, and their scanty accommodation is already strained to find room for the gun-ratings and signalmen; and there is difficulty in finding a suitable ship to accommodate the commodore and his staff of four. The twelve-knot ship can solve this difficulty, and the official on returning will point out to her master that he must wait some time for a twelve-knot convoy; that by sailing with the eight-knot convoy he will arrive earlier at his port of destination; that there are several good ships of ten knots leaving with it; that his ship will be the guide. The master demurs, but accepts; and his ship is included.

At an appointed hour on the day before the date of sailing a conference of the masters takes place. Forty ships are down to sail in the convoy, but six masters have failed to answer to their names; their ships have not arrived, or have not arrived in time for the master to reach the convoy office. Those present are first addressed by the port convoy officer and given details as to the time, speed, order, and route by which they will leave the harbour. Pilots and signalmen have been appointed. The masters are then addressed by the admiral (who in the ocean escort commands the convoy), who outlines the general conduct to

be carried out, emphasising those points considered necessary. This should be followed by a dissertation from the commodore of the convoy, who should go carefully through the books of convoy regulations and signals, and satisfy himself that each and all are thoroughly understood by the masters, laying stress upon those points which the admiral has directed to be emphasised or which he considers it prudent to emphasise. But as by this time it is long past the ordinary lunch hour, the masters are showing signs of weariness, and the port convoy officer is urging the commodore to be brief, as the room is required, and the masters have to get to the Custom House before it is closed. The dissertation of the commodore is thus cut short, and the masters disperse.

The day of sailing cannot fail to be interesting. Times must be kept, regulations implicitly obeyed, and convoy formations carried out correctly if the departure is to be a successful one. Some masters have not been in convoy, some are over anxious, some nervous, some stupid, and others careless.

Signalmen, R.N.V.R., recruited from all classes of landsmen, strange in their new surroundings, and not always obtaining necessary assistance, are frequently at fault.

Ships down to sail are held back at the last moment by accident or design, and others not expected to sail get under way with the convoy. However, somewhere near the appointed time, but after many criticisms, neglected signals, and some anxious moments, the "swept" channel is cleared, extra lookouts duly placed, the convoy instructed to form up and keep station on the "guide," while the escort takes station ahead. Ships are manoeuvred, and their masters suppose them to be in their stations; signals are difficult to get through, and the suppositions are more or less kindly permitted. Speed is increased to 7·5 knots; darkness comes on, lights are obscured, and masters after conferring with their chief officers decide to remain on the bridge.

With thirty-odd ships in a convoy one must expect some diversion of opinion, but hardly such an one as here exists, as to what distance constitutes four cables apart. The speed is set at half a knot less than convoy speed to allow ships to settle down in their stations and prevent straggling; but dawn shows this good intention has not materialised—the "guide" will have abundant proof that her course has been made good to half a degree and her speed steadily maintained

to a decimal point. Six ships are known to have kept good station throughout; others can be made out hull down, ahead, abeam, and astern. Two are altogether missing. The general signal “ Take up your proper position in the convoy ” is made, and speed reduced half a knot to permit the rear-most ships to come up. After weary waiting for the signals to be repeated and obeyed, which we try to bear in patience, the ships present take up a formation somewhat less open to attack, and it is decided to commence zigzagging, but as four masters have not attended the conference they have first to be informed what zigzag diagram will be followed, and what are the signals for starting, ceasing, restarting and changing, a task rendered the less easy by the fact that two of these ships have no signalmen, and their officers are not conversant with the semaphore. However, they are willing and intelligent, and the necessary information is got through to them somehow; speed is increased half a knot, and the signal to commence zigzag hoisted. Some confusion is caused by two ships at once putting their helms over and a couple following their example. Signals and corrections follow, the delinquents are informed that the hauling down of the signal

is the "executive"—and down the signal comes, whereupon two ships put their helms over the wrong way, causing ships in their neighbourhood to shift theirs and to manœuvre with their engines to avoid collision; these in their turn interfere with the movements of others. The zigzag is stopped, explanations sought and given, the ships resume their stations, and a fresh start is made—not altogether satisfactory, for some masters had passed through anxious moments, and are now determined to see their neighbours start before they themselves act. However, fears are lessened as evening approaches, and zigzag ceases at dark. The masters smoke their after-supper pipes, attire themselves for the night by the simple process of changing their boots, and the majority repair to the bridge to ruminate until dawn or to take such prompt action as may be expedient; and this vicious procedure they will indulge in for every night of the next twenty days.

The second day out sees general improvement all round, and the admiral signals that certain evolutions will be carried out on the morrow; these evolutions are conned over, and to-morrow is looked forward to with some anxiety. When it comes the weather is not altogether suitable



for practising evolutions for the first time—but we cannot expect “Fritz” to wait till we have practised, and up goes the signal. Mistakes, corrections, repetitions follow, and at sunset, when the admiral signals that the same evolutions will be repeated the next day, weather permitting, the tired masters and bewildered officers voice their opinion of convoy work in no uncertain tone, and could the former meet at this time in the ship chandler’s, the tactics of the admiral and the manners of the commodore would be severely dealt with. However, many difficulties disappear the next day, and the admiral’s signal, “Evolutions satisfactory,” finds the masters with confidence in themselves, some in their neighbours, smiling at the previous day’s discomfiture, and commiserating with the master of one of the missing ships which has just hove in sight and whom they had previously envied. All difficulties, however, have not vanished, the speed is 7·5 knots, when zigzagging, and our two friends previously referred to have had to steer steady courses at times to keep up at that. The westerly sea increases, and three masters report that at that low speed their ships will not answer the helm, so the slow ones are urged and encouraged, and the dull-steering ships

changed to less dangerous stations, for darkness is fast coming on. Early next morning we run into fog. For three days whistles are kept going, and each day the individual sounds decrease in number. When the weather clears half our convoy is missing, so, though we dislike doing so, wireless signals are sent out, readily answered by some and repeated for others, before the convoy is re-formed. But in the evening an S.O.S. is heard close by. The course is altered, the convoy warned to be on the alert, and immediately after a ship is sighted on the starboard quarter attacked by a large submarine. The escort puts her helm over and hurries off to the counter-attack. She is simply an armed merchant ship, and the submarine one of the latest cruiser class, whose guns would outrange any gun in the convoy. No one anticipates an adverse result, but should the escort be sunk we know that "Fritz" would play skittles with the convoy. Pros and cons are quickly considered, and the admiral signals to the convoy "Scatter, and proceed at utmost speed," which evolution is carried out in a smart manner while our escort opens fire. At midnight she sends out a wireless signal giving a rendezvous for the convoy thirty-six hours ahead. At that

rendezvous the convoy again re-forms, with three ships missing. Wireless signals are again resorted to, and two of the missing ships rejoin the following day. In the meantime the admiral has given us a brief but cheerful account of his successful counter-attack. The days are now passing quickly. Each has its incident. Station-keeping improves daily; ships haul out of line with steering-gear deranged, or drop astern with disabled machinery; target practice is indulged in and criticised; firemen, severely scalded, are placed aboard the escort (the only ship which carries a surgeon); 'flu has many victims, and a master is buried. Ships mistake the leg of the zigzag (one has known both escort and guide guilty of this blunder at different times); missing ships rejoin—alas! not all; suspicious objects are avoided, and whales fired at under the belief they are submarines. Friendly ships are sighted and recognised. When conditions permit, signalling (which has lost its terrors) is practised, and jokes are bandied. Nor are topics of conversation wanting—the policy of placing twelve-knot and seven-knot ships in the same convoy is an unfailing source. The submarine menace is touched upon and the general conclusion arrived at that the crews of the

enemy submarines have a thin and unenviable existence when afloat, and that hell awaits them when their job is done.

It has been a fine-weather voyage, but the convoy—delayed principally by the two ships who stated they could maintain eight and who now cannot get up seven and a half knots—arrives at the destroyer rendezvous twenty-four hours late, in spite of the liberal margin allowed. The destroyers take station, and the admiral signals to the convoy to “pay attention to station-keeping and avoid straggling.” At 4 p.m. one of the slow ships drops quickly astern and is called up—she has always dropped astern at this time, but not so quickly as now—a dull report, and she is seen to list to starboard. “Fritz” has got her a mile astern of her station. Destroyers bustle to the spot and drop depth charges. Have they got Fritz? The convoy executes a precautionary manoeuvre, fifteen minutes elapse, and the ship with 10,000 tons of sugar intended for France sinks 200 miles south-west of Fastnet; the crew, however, are safe in their boats—none are fatally hurt—and are picked up by one of the destroyers.

Ships bound for French Atlantic ports leave





us soon after with their escorts; we are now a much diminished convoy, with a strong destroyer escort, and our one anxiety is that the weather may remain sufficiently clear for us to adhere strictly to the given route. Soon two quick reports of a 4.7 tell us that Fritz has shown himself. Two destroyers are there in a flash, and drop depth charges over the spot indicated; they report to the admiral “Heavy oil slick rose after the fifth depth charge was dropped”—good enough, we think, but not sufficient proof for the Admiralty.

Ships bound to Channel ports break off at intervals under their escorts, and it is a small convoy which anchors in the Downs the following night, two hours before dawn. Pilots are expected off soon after daylight, so the masters give their orders, lie down in their clothes, and promise themselves a good night in to-morrow. Let us hope they get it, for after three weeks of anxious watching, cat-sleep, and hurried meals, they are bleary-eyed and weary, and in ten days’ time, often days of rush and worry, they will be putting to sea again with a grin on their faces.

We flatter ourselves that “it takes a Britisher to stay the course,” and right well these British tramp masters have proved this truth, but the

majority of those who make use of the expression are not aware what a "one-man show" the British tramp is. The majority of them, one is glad to say, now carry three deck officers (when obtainable).



## CHAPTER XV

### TONNAGE AND TRADE IN THE EAST

IF, as may be supposed, Germany embarked on the war with the ultimate design of ruining Great Britain's Empire, she could have dealt no surer final blow, following upon whatever train of circumstances, than the maiming of Britain's overseas trade. On this all else of British Empire finally depends, for it is a truism that a maritime nation cannot live and keep the seas by military ships alone. That truth was long ago apparent to Germany herself: in order to challenge British sea supremacy two fleets were needed; and only when she had, chiefly by trading with British Empire ports, created a considerable mercantile marine, did she seriously turn her activities to the building up of a fighting navy, which she calculated would presently play a respectable part in the contemplated bid for world conquest. It is conceivable that, left to itself, the octopus of German commercialism might have completed

that envelopment of the world's wealth which it had so nearly attained when war broke out.

In regard to her maritime trade, Britain has now to face the difficult position in which the world war has placed her; and although Germany has not won the war, Great Britain will have come nigh to losing it unless she can regain her old place on the seas and in the world's markets. In the trades radiating from the United Kingdom and the ports of Northern Europe, Scandinavia and America, each with an accession of strength directly resulting from the war, will, in the near future, be her serious competitors; in the Pacific, and in the trades of India, Burmah, and the Persian Gulf, her chief opponent is already Japan.

At the close of the year 1914 only one Japanese Steamship Company was engaged in British trades to and from Indian ports. With the gradual withdrawal of British tonnage from Indian waters for transport and other services of national importance, sailings of the established British lines from India to the Straits, Hong-Kong, China, and Japan were automatically reduced, but although these lines were considerably crippled, competition rates of freight were for the time being maintained. As time went on, owing to

further Government demands for tonnage, services had again to be curtailed, and some Japanese owners were induced by the upward trend of freights to divert steamers from other trades to supplement their services between Japan and India. In 1916 Japanese lines, prompted by the scarcity of British tonnage, commenced sending steamers to Indian waters for employment, many of which were chartered on a time basis to the native shippers. With a strong demand for grain sacks (which trade in pre-war times was catered for by the Apcar and Indo-China Lines, with transshipment at Hong-Kong), shippers were ready to avail themselves of any tonnage offering, rates of freight became still more profitable, and many Japanese steamers were berthed in Calcutta to Pacific Coast ports direct. In the Java-India trade, formerly catered for by the British India, Asiatic and Java-Bengal Lines, incoming Japanese Companies were now berthing steamers at regular intervals to Calcutta. Japanese owners, although not themselves offering tonnage in Rangoon, chartered vessels to native shippers for the carriage of rice to Straits ports, Ceylon, and Bombay. Similarly, Japanese steamers were taken up, on time charter, by Bombay shippers,

and employed in the Persian Gulf. During the last two years of the war several Japanese steamers were taken up for full cargoes to the Canal on a voyage charter basis. More recently a Japanese service from Calcutta to New York via the Cape has been inaugurated in active competition with British owners. Broadly stated: as the result of these reacting causes and effects, the majority of Japanese steamship companies have, during the war, made considerable additions to their fleets, have paid their shareholders unprecedented dividends, and have accumulated enormous cash reserves. In the bidding for the carrying trade of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, Japan finds herself in a strongly entrenched position, and the least that can be said as regards the British case is that owners have a lot of leeway to make up, in both tonnage and trade, ere they can hope to re-establish the pre-war position.\*

Another adverse factor arising from the war was

*\* The reconstruction programme of the P. and O. and Associated Fleets has since, in Lord Inchcape's annual address to the P. and O. stockholders, been made public.*

*At the date of the armistice the Companies (including the Orient and Khedivial Mail Lines) possessed 307 ships of 1,577,618 gross tons. Since that date 120 additional ships of 815,572 gross tons have been launched, purchased, or projected, bringing the Companies' total stock in ships to 427 steamers, a gross aggregate of 2,893,186 tons.*

the arrest or complete suspension of fleet development. In the case of the British India Company, for example, twenty new ships, representing 117,128 gross tons, which had been previously contracted for, were added to the fleet during the war; four vessels, aggregating 19,144 tons, were purchased. Twenty-one ships, some newly received from the builders, with an aggregate of 127,782 gross tons, were destroyed by enemy action; four vessels, totalling 19,920 tons, were lost by marine casualty; and two steamers of 5,398 tons were sold.

The gross tonnage of the B. I. fleet of 126 steamers at the outbreak of war was 587,071 tons; at the date of the armistice the fleet consisted of 123 ships of 570,243 tons, and although, on balance, the figures showed a deficit of only three ships representing 16,828 tons, it must be recognised that half the ships lost were up-to-date passenger steamers and cargo carriers, and that the older steamers of the fleet, which in normal times would have been sold or broken up, had perforce to be retained. Recourse was had, in the case of the *Bulimba*, to the recommissioning of a hulk; and in one case to considerable expenditure on repairs to a much needed ship, the damage to which

would ordinarily have placed her in the category of "constructive total loss." It follows that although the diminution of tonnage was not large, the enforced deterioration in general quality was considerable; apart from this, the growth of the fleet from year to year was arrested during the war period and, without allowance for annual increase in the rate of expansion, there was at the close of hostilities a deficit much greater than is represented by the figures above set out.

When, in 1917, the British Government decided to impress the vessels of all British owners, the P. and O. Company and its associates, with their administrative heads, their fleets, and their executive and personnel afloat and ashore, in Great Britain, India, Australasia, and elsewhere, came unreservedly into Government service. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that, with the knowledge that the measure had become essential to the nation's needs, the functions of the Companies, their administration, and staff were discharged with no less zeal and care than in pre-requisition days, in spite of depleted personnel, and, as is inevitable under Government control, a very considerable increase of work. The Companies' vessels were withdrawn from their

usual employment, and despatched from India or the United Kingdom to North America, Vancouver, the River Plate, even to Chile—to name only a few of their unaccustomed destinations. The provision and replacement of lascar crews for so many P. and O. or B. I. vessels transferred to Western areas was one of no small difficulty, and the Indian crews earned great credit for the way in which they worked in the danger zone, and often in cold climates—such, for example, as the North Atlantic—to which they were by constitution quite unsuited.

An agent for the East was appointed by the Ministry of Shipping at the close of the year 1917, who, from his headquarters at Bombay, controlled the working of requisitioned steamers on the coasts of India, the Straits Settlements, and China.

Rates of freight, owing to the scarcity of tonnage and the ever increasing demand for commodities, had continued to rise steadily from the outbreak of war; but with depleted fleets and an excess profits tax which rose to 80 per cent. there was in this but little advantage to British owners, and the fixing of Blue-book rates for all available British tonnage reduced their profits for

the time being below the moderate pre-war standard.

But rates of freight for free steamers then rose to a remarkable level. Jute, hemp, and cotton, carried from Calcutta to London at 17s. 6d. per scale ton in June, 1914, paid, in 1917, 322s. 6d., and in 1918, 400s.; the rate for sugar from Java to Bombay, which in July, 1914, stood at 18s. 9d. per ton of 20 hundredweights, had risen to 74s. 6d. in December, 1916, and a year later stood at 113s. 6d. But the rate for tea per ton of 40 cubic feet, Calcutta to London, had, from 35s. in June, 1914, advanced, in December, 1916, only to 47s. 6d. In 1917, when tea and shipping alike were under Government control, the rate for Government shipments of tea was maintained at 47s. 6d., but the "public" rate soared to 280s.—equal to 8d. a pound. Tea from Calcutta to New Zealand and Australia paid 35s. per scale ton in July, 1914, 95s. in December, 1916, and 150s. in December, 1918. These, which are fair examples of the general movement, were market rates; and neutral or allied owners with uncontrolled and available tonnage and with no excess profits tax to pay, were free to profit by them, and did so.

It is, perhaps, difficult for British owners to



allege any grievance in respect of non-participation in these high rates, for it was precisely because they were unable to take advantage of them, having themselves no free tonnage, that the rates were high; and the belief must be added that while the Ministry nominally fixed rates at the level of the open market, supplies of food for the national larder were, in accounting, debited with the voyage-cost only.

It may here be pointed out that while British intercolonial trade is practically free to all comers, and presumably will remain so, British owners are excluded from participation in the coasting and intercolonial trades of other countries. A British owner desiring to qualify his ships for the Dutch intercolonial or "coasting" trade, for example, has first to place them by prescribed methods on the Dutch register; but in that case they must be officered by holders of Dutch certificates and, of course, run under the Dutch flag. It is on record that a British Company trading from Sumatra to Java ports had, for a series of voyages, to put its ships into Singapore, thereby terminating the voyage from Sumatra; to document its cargo afresh, and commence a new voyage from Singapore to the Dutch ports of

discharge, thus removing the adventure from the category of "coasting" voyages. Later, by transference to the Dutch flag of the steamers so employed, the British port was eliminated from the voyage. There is the well-known case of the chartered British steamer by which passenger tickets were issued from San Francisco for a voyage around the world to New York. As the voyage began and ended at American ports, it was characterised by American jurists as a coasting voyage, and the charterer and owners were held amenable for breach of the law which reserves such voyages for vessels under the American flag. Germany discriminated in favour of her own flag by means of preferential railway rates. Voyages from Russian Baltic ports to Vladivostock came within the definition of coasting voyages, as do those from French ports to Algeria; but, as regards trade from, to, or between ports within the British Empire, there is, save in Australia,\*

\* Sydney, February 9, 1920.—"*The P. and O. Company, having failed to persuade the Commonwealth Government to suspend the provisions of the Navigation Act prohibiting overseas liners from carrying [local] passengers between Australian ports, has notified the cessation of these bookings from March 2.*"—*Times*, February 11, 1920. [March 4.—*As this book goes to press, news comes that the Commonwealth Government has, by proclamation, postponed the operation of the Act to an unnamed date.*]

no discrimination against foreign flags, either in the coasting trade or out of it.

It has been shown generally how absence of British steamers from their accustomed stations endangered British trade in the East, and it may be of particular interest to outline the gradual attenuation of the British India Company's defences.

Up to the outbreak of hostilities the Company maintained no less than twenty-five distinct passenger and cargo lines or services based on Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Tuticorin, Negapatam, Rangoon, Moulmein, Penang, or Singapore. During the early months of the war these local and through services were almost denuded of tonnage. By December, 1915, the pressure of Government service, although still high, had been somewhat relaxed, and forty-five of the coast vessels and twelve of those usually employed on the through routes were available; but six of the local lines were dormant, and the frequency of sailings to and from the United Kingdom had been much reduced. By November, 1918, the steamers serving the Calcutta-Burmah-Straits Lines had dwindled from eleven to four; the Calcutta-Bombay coasting service from nine steamers to

one; the line between Java and India, usually employing fifteen steamers, was for the time being extinct. Only thirty-seven steamers remained available for local service, and nine of the local lines had been forced into a state of suspension. Of the home lines the Bombay and Calcutta services had become widely infrequent and irregular, and the Queensland and African lines had ceased to operate.

Let us see for what measure of activity in the prosecution of the war the exchange of ships from peaceful to warlike purposes was made. That measure may be shortly summarised by the records of the B. I. ships based on the Bombay establishment. As mentioned previously, Bombay was the centre of Indian trooping and the main base of supply for the prolonged but finally victorious campaign in Mesopotamia, and for the Indian forces operating in East Africa, Egypt, Palestine, and France. In the four years ended the 4th of August, 1918, of 2,199 sailings, representing a total despatch of 9,117,180 gross tons, the sailings of the Company's vessels from Bombay as Government transports numbered 1,317, and the number of ships dry-docked and surveyed at the P. and O. and B. I. Companies' Bombay

dockyards during the same period was 432. These figures are indicative of the immense amount of work involved in repairs, storing, victualling, manning, accounting, organisation, and general management, and are exclusive of the Company's vessels employed as mine-sweepers and of vessels chartered by the Company from neutrals or others for the interim on-carrying of trades more or less contributory to war purposes.

The position as regards the trade of the P. and O. and British India Companies and their associates, following the German onslaught of March and April, 1918, however deplorable, had to be faced as cheerfully as might be. The country was at death-grips with the enemy; the essential over and above all things was transport, and it is a satisfactory reflection that at the most acute stage of the world crisis of those days, and in the anxious months which followed, the carefully built up organisations of the group played no small part in conveying to France those American forces which, as much by the threat of their mere presence as by their subsequent activities, were to turn the tide of war, and bring conviction to the German people of the futility of their dream of world conquest.



## **APPENDIXES AND INDEX**





# APPENDIX I

## KILLED OR DIED ON SERVICE.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place.</i>	<i>Rank in H. M. Service</i>	<i>Rank in Companies' Service.</i>
F. S. Atkins ..	Killed in action, France	Private 1st Coldstream Guards	Tilbury P. and O.
C. Baker ..	Killed in action, France	Drummer 12th Royal Fusiliers	Tilbury P. and O.
C. J. Bale ..	H.M.S. <i>Indra</i>	Lieutenant R.N.R.	4th Officer P. and O.
D. R. Bachelor ..	R.N.A.S. (killed)	Fight Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Officer B. I.
D. R. Bedell-Sirright ..	Gallipoli (died)	Captain R.A.M.C.	Surgeon P. and O.
D. H. Beeching ..	France (missing)	—	London Office P. and O.
E. Bethell ..	H.M.S. <i>Indra</i>	Engineer Commander R.N.R.	Chief Engineer P. and O.
F. H. Bilham ..	Died in Palestine	Gunner	London Office P. and O.
H. Breckon ..	Killed in action, France	Lieutenant R.F.C.	London Office P. and O.
J. R. Bruce ..	Killed in action	Private	London Office B. I.
R. C. A. Butler ..	Died in France	Sergeant	London Office B. I.
H. A. Sorel-Cameron ..	Killed in action	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. and O.
J. H. Caus ..	Killed	Private	London Office P. and O.
G. Case, M.C. ..	Killed in action, France	Lieutenant	London Office P. and O.
F. D. Casey ..	R.N.A.S. (killed in action)	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
A. D. Collins ..	Died of wounds, France	Lieutenant R.F.C.	London Office P. and O.
H. A. Croxford ..	Killed in action, France	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
W. T. Dale ..	Gallipoli (entertic)	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
W. D. Avray ..	Persian Gulf	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
G. L. Drewry, V.C. ..	On active service	—	London Office P. and O.
A. W. F. Foa ..	France	Lieutenant	London Office P. and O.
H. W. Fife ..	Killed	—	London Office P. and O.

## MERCHANT ADVENTURERS

KILLED OR DIED ON SERVICE—*Continued*

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place.</i>	<i>Rank in H.M. Service.</i>	<i>Rank in Companies' Service.</i>
E. G. Fryer ..	H.M.S. <i>Triumph</i> (Explosion of cordite)	Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Officer P. and O.
R. W. Gant ..	Died at Malta	—	London Office P. and O.
H. D. Bennett ..	H.M.S. <i>Cressy</i>	Commander R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. and O.
C. C. Hackman ..	Wounded and missing	Private 13th London Regiment	London Office P. and O.
J. S. Harvey ..	H.M. Submarines (killed in action)	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
J. Huddy, R.N.R.	H.M.S. <i>Bozano</i> (drowned)	Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Officer B. I.
A. K. Johnston ..	Juland	Assistant Paymaster R.N.R. H.M.S. <i>Defence</i>	London Office P. and O.
J. I. Jones-Parry ..	H.M.S. <i>Waterne</i> (killed in action)	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
V. Kendall-Sadler ..	Killed in action, France	Captain R.A.M.C.	Surgeon P. and O.
G. G. Kitchin ..	H.M.S. <i>Queen Mary</i> (Juland)	Midshipman R.N.R.	Apprentice P. and O.
E. J. Krog, M.C.	Killed in action, France	Lieutenant	London Office P. and O.
R. Lindsey ..	Killed in action, France	Private 2nd Seaforth Highlanders	Tilbury P. and O.
O. B. Lloyd ..	France, killed in action	Lieutenant	4th Officer P. and O.
W. Mackinnon ..	France, killed in action	Captain, London Scottish	Director P. and O. and B. I. Cos.
R. Maddar ..	France, killed in action	Second-Lieutenant 1/5 Gloucester Regiment	London Office P. and O.
E. E. Main ..	Died in France	Private	London Office P. and O.
H. O. Master ..	H.M.S. <i>Indefatigable</i>	Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Officer P. and O.
E. J. McBurnet ..	At Gallipoli	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. and O.
L. F. Nichols ..	Suria Bay—missing, August, 1915	—	3rd Officer B. I.

## KILLED OR DIED ON SERVICE—Continued.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place.</i>	<i>Rank in H.M. Service.</i>	<i>Rank in Companies' Service.</i>
E. P. Nott	H.M.S. <i>Isonzo</i> . active service	Engineer-Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Engineer P. and O
H. W. Parker	Missing	Private	Asst. Engineer P. and O.
D. R. Parkyn	France (killed playing into action)	Piper, London Scottish	London Office P. and O.
A. P. Parmeter	H.M.A. <i>Yacht</i>	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. and O.
J. Paterson	H.M.S. <i>Morea</i>	Engineer-Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Engineer P. and O.
F. M. Prattent	H.M.S. <i>Defence</i>	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
B. G. Ralph	H.M.S. <i>Goliath</i> (missing)	Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Officer B.I.
C. N. Ramage	H.M.S. <i>Duke of Albany</i>	Commander R.N.R.	Captain B.I.
B. A. Redshaw	Killed in action, France	Sapper	London Office P. and O.
E. Robinson	H.M.S. <i>Huaka</i>	Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Officer P. and O.
J. L. Rowan	Killed in action, Dar-danelles	Second-Lieutenant	Asst. Engineer P. and O.
C. G. Seaton	Killed in action, France	London Scottish	London Office P. and O.
C. E. Sims	H.M.S. <i>Boyano</i> (Jutland)	Lieutenant R.N.R.	2nd Officer P. and O.
J. Stewart	—	Corporal Rifle Brigade	R.A. Doot P. and O.
A. F. Taylor	Killed in action, France	Private	Asst. Engineer P. and O.
W. A. Thackara	H.M.S. <i>India</i>	Engineer Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R.	Asst. Engineer P. and O.
S. P. Trounson	H.M.S. <i>India</i>	Engineer Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R.	Electrician P. and O.
H. Twynan	Killed in action, H.M. Submarines	Lieutenant R.N.R.	3rd Officer P. and O.
G. E. N. Williams	Wounded and missing	Private 13th London Regiment	London Office P. and O.
E. J. Walker	Died of Wounds	Captain R.F.A.	3rd Engineer B.I.

## THE VICTORIA CROSS.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Rank in H.M. Service.</i>	<i>Rank in Companies' Service.</i>
H. Auten	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Third Officer P. & O. Co.
G. L. Drewry	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Third Officer P. & O. Co.
E. Unwin	Commodore R.N.	Formerly Officer P. & O. Co.
R. A. J. Warneford	Lieutenant R.N.R. (R.N.A.S.)	Formerly Officer P. & O. Co.

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER.

T. W. Bennett	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
C. Brooks	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
C. W. Burleigh	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
J. McL. Borland	Captain R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
C. M. Redhead	Captain R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
R. G. F. Saunders	Major R.A.S.C.	Purser P. & O. Co.
H. V. Wilkinson	Major Royal Fusiliers	P. & O. Co., Shanghai

## ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

## COMMANDERS (MILITARY).

H. W. A. Clark	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
A. B. Foster	Lt.-Colonel	P. & O. Co., Royal Albert Dock
W. H. Sweny	Captain R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.

## OFFICERS (MILITARY).

C. A. Baily	Major Essex Regiment	Head Office P. & O. Co.
A. H. Colquhoun	Captain A.O.C.	Head Office P. & O. Co.
C. P. Cooper	Lt.-Commander R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
H. S. Cox	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Third Officer P. & O. Co.
F. T. Groome	Lt.-Commander R.N.R.	Second Officer P. & O. Co.
H. W. Kenrick	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
E. H. Orchard	Lt.-Commander R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
H. E. Standage	Captain R.A.S.C.	Clerk P. & O. Co.
R. H. Stanger	Lt.-Commander	Chief Officer P. and O. Co.

## OFFICERS (CIVIL).

E. B. Bartlett	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
E. W. Bruce	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
W. T. Kendall	—	Chief Engineer P. & O. Co.
R. Leslie	—	Supt. Engineer P. & O. Co.
W. B. Palmer	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
P. Selwyn	Lt.-Commander R.N.R., ret.	Purser P. & O. Co.
F. White	—	Manager P. & O. Branch Line
J. Young	Eng.-Commander R.N.R.	Chief Engineer P. & O. Co.

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Rank in H.M. Service.</i>	<i>Rank in Companies' Service.</i>
H. Auten	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Third Officer P. & O. Co.
F. (t. Cadiz	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
C. W. Cartwright	Lt.-Commander R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
C. J. Charlewood	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Formerly Second Officer B. I. Co.
G. W. Cockman	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
J. W. Damer-Powell	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Third Officer P. & O. Co.
A. B. Davis	Asst. Paymaster R.N.R.	Asst. Purser P. & O. Co.
H. C. Davis	Lt.-Commander R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
C. L. Dettmar	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Second Officer P. & O. Co.
W. H. Dunn (and bar)	Flight-Commander	Third Officer B. I. Co.
C. J. L. Hayward	Sub.-Lieutenant R.N.R.	Fourth Officer P. & O. Co.
A. M. King	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
C. R. King	—	Commander B. I. Co.
W. E. W. O'Connor	—	Commander B. I. Co.
J. W. G. Price	Midshipman R.N.R.	Apprentice P. & O. Co.
A. T. Yardley	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Fourth Officer P. & O. Co.

## THE MILITARY CROSS.

(t. Case	Lieutenant	Head Office P. & O. Co. (Killed in action)
J. P. Day	Lieutenant	Formerly Head Office P. & O. Co.
D. F. Hook	Lieutenant, 2nd Hants Regiment	Formerly Head Office P. & O. Co.
E. J. Krog	Lieutenant	Head Office P. & O. Co. (Killed in action)
F. R. Mann	Lieutenant	Head Office P. & O. Co.
S. E. Pakeman	Lieutenant Royal Fusiliers	Formerly Head Office P. & O. Co.
H. G. Taylor	Lieutenant R.G.A.	Head Office P. & O. Co.
H. W. Griffiths	Lieutenant	Royal Albert Dock P. & O. Co.

## MILITARY SERVICE MEDAL.

A. T. Rolt	Sergeant	Head Office P. & O. Co.
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## DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS.

J. W. G. Price (and bar)	Midshipman R.N.R.	Apprentice P. & O. Co.
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## CROIX DE GUERRE.

C. S. D. B. Wright	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Second Officer P. O. & Co.
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## MERCHANT ADVENTURERS

## CROIX DE CHEVALIER, LEGION D'HONNEUR.

J. McI. Borland	Captain R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
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## ORDER OF THE REDEEMER (GREEK).

P. S. Ram	Captain R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
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## ORDER OF THE WHITE EAGLE WITH SWORDS (SERBIAN).

## CLASS IV.

W. R. F. Hickey	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
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## CLASS V.

H. J. Smith	—	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
E. E. H. Starling	—	Second Officer P. & O. Co.
S. H. W. Gibson	—	Second Officer P. & O. Co.
Eric Parker	—	Third Officer P. & O. Co.

## ORDER OF ST. SAVA (SERBIAN).

A. W. Randall	—	Purser P. & O. Co.
W. C. Robertson	—	Chief-Engineer P. & O. Co.

## MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Rank in I.M. Service.</i>	<i>Rank in Companies' Service.</i>
A. H. Acheson	—	Commander B. I. Co.
C. A. Baily (3)	Major Essex Regiment	Head Office P. & O. Co.
H. J. Bowdon	Engineer O'm'dr. R.N.R.	Chief Engineer P. & O. Co.
C. Brooks	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
C. W. Burleigh	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
W. Buswell	—	Commander B. I. Co.
H. A. Carey	—	Commander B. I. Co.
T. N. Collins	—	Chief Officer B. I. Co.
D. Cowieson	—	Second Officer B. I. Co.
H. S. Cox	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Third Officer P. & O. Co.
R. J. E. Dodds	Sub.-Lieutenant R.N.R.	Fourth Officer P. & O. Co.
D. S. Earp	Lieutenant R.N.A.S.	Third Officer B. I. Co.
I. Hartford	Flight-O'm'dr. R.N.A.S.	Chief Officer B. I. Co.
K. Jenkins	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
E. F. McLeod	Lieutenant R.N.R.	Second Officer P. & O. Co.
C. R. A. Newby	Commander R.N.R.	Commander P. & O. Co.
S. Selby	—	Chief Engineer B. I. Co.
H. A. Sharp	—	Commander B. I. Co.
R. C. Warden	Lt.-Commander R.N.R.	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
G. Younger	—	Cadet, B. I. Co.

## MENTIONED IN OFFICIAL COMMENDATIONS.

P. O. Batten	—	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
F. G. Cadiz	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
H. J. Cooper	—	Assistant Engineer P. & O. Co.
F. Graham	—	Chief Engineer P. & O. Co.
D. Miller	—	Third Engineer P. & O. Co.
A. Nicklen	—	Second Officer P. & O. Co.

## MENTIONED IN OFFICIAL COMMENDATIONS BY SERBIAN GOVERNMENT.

W. R. F. Hickey	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
C. R. Kettlewell	—	Supernumary Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
H. J. Smith	—	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
E. E. H. Starling	—	Second Officer P. & O. Co.
H. G. S. Wood	—	Supernumary Second Officer P. & O. Co.

## LLOYD'S MEDAL (SILVER).

F. G. Cadiz	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
F. Graham	—	Chief Engineer P. & O. Co.
C. G. Smith	—	Commander P. & O. Co.
A. B. Vaughan	—	Chief Officer P. & O. Co.
S. C. Warner	—	Commander P. & O. Co.

## LLOYD'S MEDAL (BRONZE).

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Rank in H.M. Service.</i>	<i>Rank in Companies' Service.</i>
Q. M. Perry	—	Quartermaster s.s. <i>Nyanza</i>
Q. M. Burne	—	Quartermaster s.s. <i>Nyanza</i>

## ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY'S MEDAL.

H. C. Brown	—	Chief Officer B. I. Co.
R. J. E. Dodds	—	Third Officer P. & O. Co.
W. Hutchings	—	Third Engineer B. I. Co.
G. E. C. Sanderoock	—	Third Officer P. & O. Co.

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(LONDON OFFICES)

## KILLED OR DIED ON SERVICE.

J. Amos	Second Lieutenant	Royal Flying Corps
R. A. Boyle	Private	Seaforth Highlanders
S. B. Cook	Private	12th County of London Batt.
H. S. Fox	Second Lieutenant	Seaforth Highlanders
*L. B. Franks	Lance-Corporal	9th County of London Rifles
D. A. W. Hill	Lieutenant	East Kent Regiment
C. H. Langridge	Gunner	Royal Field Artillery
P. L. Leach	Second Lieutenant	Welsh Regiment
S. M. Lines	Second Lieutenant	5th Battalion City of London Regiment
H. Machell	Private	Royal West Surrey Regiment
L. Smith	Bombardier	Royal Garrison Artillery

\* Died while prisoner of war.

## THE MILITARY CROSS.

G. Holdsworth	Lieutenant	R.F.A.
W. H. E. Watkins	Lieutenant	1st Battalion East Yorks

## THE MILITARY MEDAL.

W. C. How	Bombardier	R.F.A.
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## APPENDIX II

### INDEX OF MERCHANT STEAMERS NAMED IN THE TEXT

*Ships marked \* are those of owners other than P. & O./B. I. group.*

H.S. = Hospital Ship. A.M.C. = Armed Merchant Cruiser.

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